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GENERAL GURKO'S
ADVANCE GUARD
1877

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OPERATIONS OF GENERAL GURKO'S

ADVANCE GUARD IN 1877

OPERATIONS
OF
GENERAL GURKO'S
ADVANCE GUARD
IN 1877

BY
COLONEL EPAUCHIN
(of the Russian Staff)



TRANSLATED BY
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FORMING THE SEVENTH VOLUME
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I hope the officers of her Majesty's army may never degenerate into bookworms. There is happily at present no tendency in that direction, for I am glad to say that this generation is as fond of danger, adventure, and all manly out-of-door sports as its forefathers were. At the same time, all now recognize that the officer who has not studied war as an applied science, and who is ignorant of modern military history, is of little use beyond the rank of Captain. The principle of selection, pure and simple, is gradually being applied to the promotion of all officers, especially in the higher grades. As years go on this system will be more and more rigidly enforced.

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or to be shot in the attempt. Experience enables me to warn all these determined men of how small their chance is of ever reaching any great position in the army unless they devote many of their spare hours every week to a close study of tactics and strategy as dealt with in the best books upon recent wars.

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I know how truly this work is undertaken as a labour of love by you as editor and by all who are helping you. But I also know that you and they will feel amply repaid if it assists the young officer to learn the science of his profession and, in doing this, to improve the fighting value of the service, to the true interests of which we are one and all sincerely devoted.

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England has been engaged in no great war since the beginning of the century. It follows, therefore, that both strategy and tactics have been more widely treated by foreign authors than by our own, not only for the reason set forth above, but also because having usually taken a personal part in them they are naturally more interested therein

It is sometimes urged that lessons of continental conflicts are in no wise useful to ourselves; this is ridiculous. The guiding principles of the operations of war are the same, whether they are conducted against civilized or savage foes. If our army were prepared only to meet the latter it need scarcely be maintained in its present form, but no one can say with our widespread

Empire that we shall not be called upon to meet civilized opponents. If we are able to deal with them, we shall certainly have no difficulty in defeating savages, for it is by the training and discipline which render troops fit to meet those of their own state of civilization that they prove superior to the savage when they meet him in the field.

Strategy is the same, whether used against Arabs or Frenchmen. The tactics employed differ as the weapons of the enemy differ. But the soldiers trained to meet the highest class of opponents are, *ipso facto*, better qualified to deal with the inferior.

This series, therefore, will contain translations of well-known foreign writers, and it will also contain original English works dealing with the kind of warfare in which we are most frequently engaged, and with certain special phases of British military experience which have hitherto been somewhat inadequately dealt with. The history of British arms is replete with interest and is second to none in moving incidents of gallantry. Many of these have already been recorded, but the actual lessons to be learned from them have not always been systematically treated. It is hoped, as this series progresses, to do so, and to secure for future generations the practical deductions to be made from the deeds of British soldiers. A list of the volumes already arranged for will be found at the beginning of this book, and it will be the aim of the editor to add from time to time such works only as seem of the first importance in the theory and record of military achievement.

WALTER H. JAMES.

EDITOR'S PREFACE

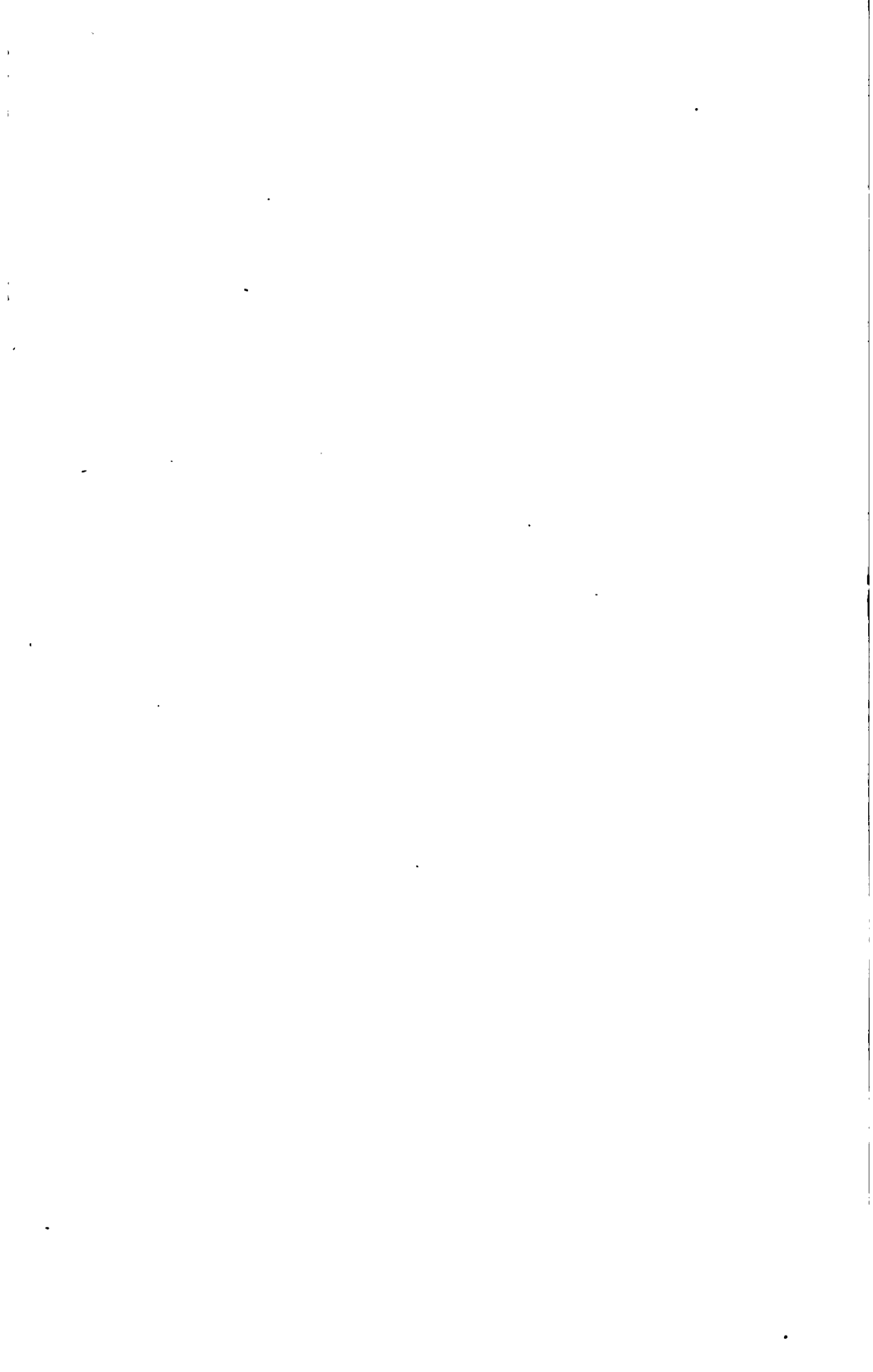
THE Russian plan of campaign postulated the occupation of Roumania and the lines of railroad which led from Yassy and Bender through Galatz to Bukhariesht and Giurgievo. Having thus secured a firm footing in the Principalities, the Danube was to be crossed by the main army between Nikopolis and Rustchuk. The Dobrudja was to be occupied by a force sufficient to protect the Russian communications through Galatz, then, when the Danube was passed, a force was to be left on either flank to hold off any advance of the Turks from the direction of Shumla or Widin, while the main Russian army was to be pushed over the Balkans to Adrianople. This operation involved the seizure of a pass over the Balkans, and to Gurko and his Advance Guard this task was entrusted. The main road from Sistova, where the Russian bridge over the Danube was, passes through Tirnova over the Shipka Pass through Eski Zagra to Adrianople, and it was desired to capture this. Gurko considered that a direct attack was undesirable, as the pass was held by the Turks with some 3000 infantry, a number of irregulars,

and a few guns. He therefore determined to leave a regiment of Cossacks (the 30th) and two guns to watch the northern side of the pass, while with the rest of the Advance Guard he crossed the Balkans to the east of the Shipka by a track half-way between the Elena and Travna passes. The movement was completely successful, the Shipka Pass was captured by the Russians, and held all through the trying times which ensued when they were brought to a halt before Plevna, notwithstanding the efforts of the Turks to recapture it, and eventually served for a passage of a large portion of the Russian army in 1878. The Advance Guard was, it is true, unable to remain on the south side of the Balkans, but that was not Gurko's fault. The Russian plan of campaign was too ambitious for the numbers available. When the two flanking forces were disposed, and the Balkan pass seized, no troops were left for the advance on Adrianople, and it was not until later in the campaign, when Plevna had fallen and the Russian strength nearly doubled, that it was possible to do so. Gurko's raid over the mountains will always remain as a brilliant example of what may be done by an energetic leader. His cavalry scouts destroyed two lines of railroad and penetrated to within a few marches of Adrianople, spreading dismay wherever they reached, and gathering information as to the strength and dispositions of the enemy, while in the actual fighting the horse-

men showed their superiority over their opponents, winding up the long series of successes by covering the retreat of the Advance Guard through the Balkans in the face of three times their own numbers.

WALTER H. JAMES.

Some of the names given in the text are not to be found in the Russian maps, nor have I been able to find them on any others accessible. But in no cases are they important; the positions of the points in question can be inferred from the text.



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OPERATIONS OF GENERAL GURKO'S ADVANCE GUARD IN 1877

CHAPTER I.

The scene of operations after crossing the Danube—Formation of the advance guard—Sketch of the neighbourhood—Advance of the force—Taking of Tirnova.

On the 12th June the 14th Corps crossed the Danube at Galatz, and on the 15th the advance guard of our army crossed at Zimnitsa, and, after a sharp fight, occupied the heights on the further side and the town of Sistova.

By the evening of the 15th we had on the right bank three divisions of infantry and a brigade of Rifles, and on the 16th the 14th Corps occupied Babadagh and moved on the line Chernovada-Kustendje. By the 20th the Russian army was concentrated in Bulgaria in two masses, the main body at Sistova and the smaller at Babadagh.

The main body included the 8th, 9th, 12th, and

13th Corps, the 4th Brigade of Rifles, 6 battalions of the Bulgarian Contingent, the Caucasus Cossack Brigade, and several other Cossack regiments; the smaller body was the 14th Corps. In all there were on the right bank some 130 battalions, the force round Sistova amounting to 65,000 men and 244 guns.

At this time the nearest Turkish forces were at Nikopol, 25 miles off, about 19,000 in number, while at Rustchuk, 38 miles distant, were some 32,000 men, making, with the remnants of the force beaten at Sistova, 50,000 men in round numbers. The remainder of the Turkish forces were at least 110 miles distant, except some small detachments at Tirnova, the Shipka Pass, and other places.

After the passage of the Danube the Commander-in-Chief determined to keep two objects in view: (1) the improvement of his communications with the left bank, and (2) the occupying of the country between the lower waters of the Yantra and the Wid as far as Biela, Tirnova, and Plevna, thus commanding the plateau between these two streams, and separating the eastern portion of the Turkish forces from the western.

Moreover, it was essential to get information as to the enemy's movements.

In accordance with the Commander-in-Chief's desire, our forces moved out of Sistova in three directions. The 12th and 13th Corps, under the Tsesarévich, moved to the River Yantra, with the view of surrounding and taking Rustchuk: the 9th Corps formed the right of the army, its objective being to take Nikopol, while the third body, General Gurko's advance guard, moved to the south.

This force was constituted by an order of the 18th June, and was composed as follows:—

Infantry: 4th Brigade Rifles, 4 Batts., 3000 bayonets (Major-General Drietsinski); Bulgarian Contingent (Major-General Stolatov), 6 Batts., 2500 bayonets; two companies Cossack infantry, 262 bayonets; 1st and 2nd Mountain Battery, 14 guns (2 guns lost in crossing river).

Cavalry: Dragoon Brigade, H.I.H. Prince Eugene Maximilianovich, 8th Astrakan Dragoon Regt., 4 squadrons; 9th Kazan Dragoon Regt., 4 squadrons.

Composite Detachment from the Guards, $\frac{1}{2}$ squadron; 16th Horse Battery, 6 H.A. guns.

Composite Brigade, H.I.H. Prince Nicolai Maximilianovich, 9th Kiev Hussar Regt., 4 squadrons; Don Cossack Regt. (No. 30), 6 sotnias; Don Cossack Battery (No. 10), 6 H.A. guns.

Don Cossack Brigade (Colonel Chernozubov), Don Regt. (No. 21) 6 squadrons; Don Regt. (No. 26), 6 squadrons; No. 15 Battery, 6 guns.

Caucasus Cossack Brigade (Colonel Tutolmin), Kuban Regt. (No. 2), 6 squadrons; Osetin Regt., 6 squadrons; Don Cossack Battery (No. 1) (Horse mountain battery), 8 guns.

One company Ural Cossacks and Mounted Engineer detachment, (Colonel Count Roniker), formed from Caucasus, Don, and Ural Cossacks, trained in engineering at Giurgevo (say, 200 men).

In all, about $10\frac{1}{2}$ battalions, $43\frac{1}{2}$ squadrons, and 40 guns, or some 5800 infantry and 5000 cavalry; in round numbers 11,000 men.

Major-General Rauch was second in command, and Colonel Naglovski chief of the staff.

The objective of the force was thus laid down in the following directions given to General Rauch, dated Zimnitsa, 20th June :—

“The Grand Duke Commanding-in-Chief lays down the following objective for the force : After the cavalry and Bulgarian Contingent have crossed the Danube, it is to advance in the direction of Tirnova and Selvi (as shown in the accompanying map) with a view to discovering the enemy’s position, finding out what roads there are into the mountains, and the condition of the passes of the Balkans, and preparing for an advance into the mountains.

“Subsequently, when a special order from the Commander-in-Chief is received, the force is to push its advance further, and endeavour to seize the passes of the Balkans and to push its cavalry still further forward, with a view to raising the Bulgarian

population in revolt, supporting it, and scattering the Turkish detachments, if such are met with in no great strength. When this is accomplished, under cover of the force, efforts are to be made to put the roads in such a state as will allow of transport trains and heavy impedimenta crossing the mountains.

“The order in which the main body, as well as the other parts of the force, is to advance is shown in the accompanying plans. From them your Excellency will see that in the first movement, the Caucasus Brigade is to move independently of the rest of the force, at first with the 25th Infantry Division, and afterwards with the 9th Corps.

“When the latter Corps has reached the position which it is to occupy, covering the right flank of the army, part of it, preceded by the Caucasus Brigade, is to make for the mountains by way of Lovcha, the Caucasus Brigade being thus put in such a direction as will in all probability lead to its penetrating the Balkans and coming down on the flank and rear of the enemy's forces, engaged in defending the passes through the mountains against the remaining columns of the Advance Guard.”

From these instructions it is plain that the operations of the Advance Guard were to be divided

into two phases, the first up to the passage of the Balkans, during which it was

(1) To execute a reconnaissance in the direction of Tirnova and Selvi ;

(2) To collect information as to the passes of the Balkans ; and

(3) To make preparations for a movement into the mountains, though that movement was not to be actually undertaken without special orders from headquarters.

The second phase was to begin from the moment these orders were received, and the force was then

(1) To seize the passes ;

(2) Send its cavalry to the south of the Balkans to raise the population in revolt ;

(3) To scatter the Turkish detachments, where they were small enough to be easily dealt with ; and

(4) To cover the repair of the roads through the Balkans.

It is necessary to add that the Caucasus Brigade did not form an integral part of the force, but was from the 21st June to be at the disposal of the commander of the 35th Infantry Division, and afterwards of the commander of the 9th Corps. It could not join the force till after the passage of the

Balkans, and, as a matter of fact, in no sense formed part of it, so that the strength of the Advance Guard, on entering the Balkans, was only $31\frac{1}{2}$ squadrons of cavalry and 32 guns, or some 3700 sabres, besides the $10\frac{1}{2}$ battalions before mentioned.

Had any preparation been made beforehand for the task set before the force? Even while the army was collecting in Bessarabia, there had been rumours current that in the approaching campaign, cavalry would be employed on a large scale, and raids, incursions, and distant expeditions were prophesied, and there were various detached facts which formed some foundation for such rumours. For a separate division had been formed of the Caucasus and Don regiments under the command of Lieut.-General Skobelev the Elder, which was nicknamed "the raiding division." After the crossing of the Danube this division was dissolved, and, on the 18th June, the Advance Guard constituted.

To form the latter, in addition to the brigades constituting the former division, regiments and horse batteries were drawn from two regular divisions, and the brigades thus formed were placed under newly-chosen commanders. Four mounted brigades were united to a brigade of Rifles and the newly

formed Bulgarian Contingent, and the whole, under the name of the Advance Guard, placed under a general who had not yet reached the theatre of war. Major-General Rauch was in temporary command, and till General Gurko arrived, the force was to take up a position at Sara-yar, Tsarévich, and Tursk-Sliva.

The composition of the force was very complicated, and quite impromptu. All the higher officers entered on their duties simultaneously with the formation, and none of the units composing it had been under the command of General Gurko in peace time. The staff was also composed of officers temporarily attached.

Among the units composing it was a body which was also of recent formation, the Bulgarian Contingent. It was set on foot with a view to forming a nucleus for the forces which we hoped to raise in Bulgaria, one which would have all the high military qualities of our regular army. It was formed while our army was at Kishenev. The best officers, non-commissioned officers, and privates were told off to drill the new levy. Most of the instructors of the lower ranks were natives of Bessarabia who knew Bulgaria more or less, which facilitated the drilling of the volunteers. At first the latter did not

exceed 300 in number, and were styled the Guard of Honour, being placed under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Kalitin of the 1st Turkestan Rifles. The general direction of the levy was intrusted to Major-General Stolietov. The ranks filled rapidly from the first, most of the volunteers being men of experience who had taken part in small risings against the Turks, and also in the recent Servian war.

In April, 1877, it went into camp at Ploeshti, where its numbers rose to 3000. The force was then renamed the Bulgarian Contingent, and divided into three brigades of two "drujiny" (brotherhoods) or battalions, each of 500 men. Each "drujina" was divided into five companies, four of the line, and one of sharpshooters.¹

The uniform of the levy consisted of a cloak, a short black jacket with a turned down collar, red facings, and brass buttons, loose black knickerbockers, high boots, a round sheepskin cap with a light green top, and an eight-pointed brass cross. The cloaks were of stout grey cloth with red facings. Their equipment was the same as in our army, except

¹ This was the formation of the Russian Infantry. The sharpshooter company was supposed to cover the advance of the remainder of the battalion in column.—ED.

the knapsacks, for which canvas bags were substituted. Their arms were Chassepot rifles, and a yataghan instead of a bayonet. The sole charge of the clothing and equipment was taken by the Panslavic Committee. The men, full of enthusiasm, rapidly learnt their drill, and on 6th May, the flag presented by the town of Samara was solemnly consecrated. The first nail was driven by the Grand Duke Commanding-in-Chief, the second by General Nepokoichitski, followed by the commander of the contingent, the representatives of the town of Samara, the ecclesiastic who performed the service, while the last was driven by a volunteer named Tserko-Petkovich, the terror of the Balkans, who for nineteen years had been a thorn in the side of the unbelievers, and had lain three years in prison, the traces of the iron collar being still visible round his neck. With tears in his eyes he took the silver nail, crossed himself, kissed the flag, and cried aloud in Bulgarian, "May this flag, by the help of God, pass from end to end of the land of Bulgaria, and make the eyes of our weeping mothers, wives, and daughters smile again, and may the heathen, the wicked, and the shameless fly before it, and may peace, security, and prosperity follow in its train!"

The honour of bearing the flag fell to the 3rd "drujina." On the night of the 22nd June, the Contingent crossed the Danube and joined the Advance Guard. Certain changes were introduced into the constitution of the body, one company being withdrawn from each battalion. The companies thus withdrawn were filled up with new volunteers, six new battalions being thus created, which were stationed at Sistova, Tirnova, and Nikopol, as a reserve to the field battalions. The formation of those was intrusted to Colonel Korsakov.

As regards men and horses, our cavalry was admirable and in every way superior to that of the Turks. But its training in field work proved insufficient, especially under such trying conditions as those of the theatre of war in Turkey. After the Crimean War, in which the want of cohesion of our cavalry had been clearly shown, great efforts were made to remedy the defects there noticed, especially in the way of increasing the mobility of the arm. But routine and old prejudices are hard to overcome, and thanks to them there were still in 1877 many points in which our cavalry came short of the qualities indispensable if this arm is to play a leading part in war.

It was not yet fully trained in prolonged and rapid movements, so that, when increased activity was required of it, it suffered great losses. Its training in patrolling and still more in reconnoitring proved extremely slight. Though after the American War of 1861-5, and in the Franco-Prussian of 1870, we had acquired a higher notion of what the arm should do as the screen of an army, at the same time the great increase in the power of artillery and rifle fire led to the general adoption of the false idea that the action of the arm would for the future be very limited on the field of battle. It was held that cavalry could no longer attack infantry, and hence it often dismounted even where the ground was well suited for charging. There were even instances of its using its firearms on horseback.

There were no charges made by large bodies, and such as there were were made by small bodies, this being partly accounted for by want of enterprise in the leaders and partly by the injudicious use made of the arm. But this was not all, as may be seen from the following judgment of General Pujeevski: "Before our last war with the Turks our cavalry was passing through one of the most melancholy phases of its existence. The most recent

campaigns in which such brilliant results had been obtained by artillery and rifle fire had quite changed the idea of the action of cavalry on the field of battle, while the successes of the German horse in the early part of the war of 1870, though it had no enemy worthy of the name to deal with, had caused the strategical importance of the arm to be overestimated at the expense of its utility on the battle-field. Our cavalry, in the main, was on the same track, going round and round in the circle of reconnoitring and scouting duties. In this way the spirit of enterprise, which should be kept alive by the consciousness that cavalry is at least the equal of other arms on the battle-field, was gradually weakened. The power of moving in masses and smartness in evolution had distinctly decreased as compared with old days.

“The inclination shown by our cavalry during the war to dismount was, to some extent, due, no doubt, to the mountainous nature of the scene of operations, but in a far greater degree to the prevalence of false ideas as to the duties of cavalry on the field, proper importance not being attached to charges in closed masses.”

Yet, in considering the action of our cavalry in the late war, we must not forget that it almost

always met with serious obstacles as regards ground. Still, we may say with confidence that if it had had to a greater degree the dash which it should have, and been better trained for action, it would have found these obstacles less insuperable.

THE SCENE OF OPERATIONS.

The region in which the operations of General Gurko's force took place may be said to be bounded on the north by a line passing through Plevna and Sistova; on the east by the Yantra to its junction with the Zlata, and from thence to Yambola; on the south by the line Yambola-Kandjik; and on the west by the line Kandjik-Chirpan-Selvi-Plevna.

This region may be divided into three parts, the northern, reaching to the Balkans; the central, a part of the main Balkan range; and the south, the Trans-Balkan part. Almost the whole of it is high-lying and mountainous, though in the northern and southern parts there are plains. The main feature of the whole is the Balkan range, which we will therefore describe first.

The portion of that range through which General Gurko passed with his force is part of what are called the Central Balkans, which extend from the Valley of

the Isker to the spur of Slivno, and may be divided into two parts. The western portion, as far as Mount Kurudja, has a mean elevation of some 6500 feet, and is the highest and least accessible part of the range. The eastern portion, from Mount Kurudja to the spur of Slivno, was the scene of the operations. Here the mountains are lower and have a mean elevation of 4500 feet, and further east of 3500. The special characteristic of this portion is that the southern slope is abrupt and steep, in places precipitous, having an angle of forty degrees. The northern is gradual and falls in terraces towards the plains of the Danube. The mountain streams which flow towards the rivers score deep furrows in the northern slopes, and the tributaries mark out smaller ranges, parallel with the main chain. These terrace-like lower ranges of the Central Balkans, intersected by streams, extend northward as far as Selvi and Tirnova. But there are hills even beyond this line, though much lower, yet preserving the same character of terraces falling gradually towards the Danube, intersected by deep valleys. Thus to the south of the line Selvi-Tirnova the country is distinctly mountainous, and to the north still hilly. We may add that the northern slopes of the Central

Balkans are of chalk, while the summits and eastern slopes are of solid rock. As regards vegetation, the crests, which for the most part are dome-shaped or cap-shaped, are bare ; the northern slopes are covered with thick oak, beech, and maple woods, while the southern are unwooded, and only in retired dells is low brushwood to be met with.

From Mount Kurudja, 5019 feet in height, the range falls in an easterly direction to 4500, and further on 3500 feet. Mount St. Nicholas, near the Shipka Pass, is 4382 feet in height. The southern slope of the Shipka and Travna Balkans keeps the character of a steep low wall as far as the valley of the Maglishka and the town of Maglish. Further south it is less steep and spreads out to about six miles, and no longer resembles a wall, though still steeper than the northern side. It is everywhere intersected by valleys, through which run the affluents of the Tundja, while the northern slope, from which flow the Yantra and its numerous tributaries, extends northwards to the line Tirnova-Ksarevo, filling up with regular terraces all the space between the said tributaries.

On the south side the Central Balkans have a secondary chain running side by side with them, from Yambola to the west, which is called the Middle

Range, or Lesser Balkans (Karadja Dag), separated from the former by an elevated plain, extending from Slivno to Kalopher. This plain is from 1500 to 2000 feet above sea-level, and is crossed here and there by low spurs which unite the Greater and Lesser Balkans and along which runs the road from Slivno through Kazanlik to Kalopher and Sophia.

The Kazanlik plateau is one of the most charming districts in the Balkan peninsula. From the summit of the Shipka Pass there is a magnificent view over the plain of the Tundja, surrounded on all sides by lofty mountains, and the greatest breadth of which does not exceed seven miles, and which for the most part is quite level. In the middle lies the town of Kazanlik, surrounded by thick woods. The higher crests of the neighbouring mountains are covered even in June with snow, while below the rose gardens are in full bloom.

In Bulgarian this plateau is called Tulovsko Pole, from the village of Tulovo, which lies seven miles east of Kazanlik. The name recalls memories of the earliest history of the Balkan countries. Here probably was the site of the Celtic town of Tile, from which King Komontorios and his successor ruled from 279 to 213 B.C. the Thracian mountaineers,

from the banks of the Danube to the Ægean Sea, and the Greek, Pontine, and Propontine trading republics. The part of the Lesser Balkans between Yambola and the Strema is called in Turkish the Karadja Dagħ. Its northern slope bounds the plain of the Tundja and its southern that of the Maritsa; its mean elevation is 3000 feet; the northern slope and the crests are covered with woods, the southern is unwooded.

Though in that part where the operations of Gurko's force took place the scenery is not so grand as in some others, yet owing to its length and breadth and situation the range had a considerable effect on the operations of the force. It lay right athwart its line of advance, and this made the study of its features indispensable as regards accessibility and fitness for the passage of an army. With this object the height of mountains and passes, absolute and relative, the length and gradient of ascents and descents, and how many passes lay on a particular line had to be ascertained. The easiest passes proved to be those between Mount Kurudja and Slivno. Those of Travna and Khainkoi, though absolutely lower than that of Arab-Konak (150 feet), were relatively higher.

Roads for wheeled carriages pass over the two former and that of Tvarditsa. The latter had been much improved by the Turks some years before the war. There were tracks for pack animals over the Metli and Slivno passes. The streams were small, but very numerous. They were torrents, full and furious in spring, and shrinking the rest of the year so as to be fordable whenever the nature of their banks admitted of it. The most important was the Yantra, a somewhat serious obstacle in the lower part of its course, and the Maritsa, which watered the southern portion of the region.

As for the climate, its chief defect is the great difference in summer between the day and night temperature. In the lower parts even in May fierce heat sets in, lasting till September, and being at its height in July and August. During this season there is scarcely any rain, so that after a month or six weeks there is a thorough drought.

The population for the most part consisted of Bulgarians, Turks being found mainly in the Tirnova district. The town of that name was the most important in the region, being the meeting place of the chief roads through the Balkans, and a place of some consequence in itself, having 11,000 inhabitants,

and being the ancient capital of Bulgaria. In the southern part the most important place is Eski Zagra, a wealthy town of some 18,000 inhabitants.

The means of subsistence were sufficient, especially for such a comparatively small force. There were not many good roads, and the made road from Sistova through Tirnova and Shipka to Kazanlik and Eski Zagra, and thence to Chirpan, with a branch to Yeni Zagra, was the best: all the rest were merely tracks, and by no means satisfactory. There were railways only in the southern portion, viz. the branches from Tirnova to Seimenli and Philippopolis. It was plain that the greatest difficulty would be experienced in the central portion of the range, and that subsequently the communications would be endangered until all the passes had been occupied.

CONCENTRATION OF THE FORCE. ENTRANCE ON THE CAMPAIGN. TAKING OF THE TOWN OF TIRNOVA.

Immediately upon the receipt of the order constituting the advance guard a separate force, the units destined to compose it crossed the Danube and marched on the points of concentration: some were already at Sistova, and these immediately prepared to take the field.

On the evening of the 19th June the Rifle Brigade received instructions to leave its bivouac on the heights of Sistova the next day. The entrenching tools and two packages of cartridges per man, which had been given out in addition to the ammunition in the pouches at the time of crossing the river, were to be carried on the regimental waggons, so as to lighten the men for manœuvres. The only vehicles that were to accompany the battalions were the field ambulance, the medicine cart, two ammunition carts, and one carrying the baggage of the commander. The brigade had in ordinary times field kitchens attached to it, which prepared the food as required. Subsequently the train of the brigade was swelled by some bullock-carts carrying the men's knapsacks.

The passage of the Danube was slowly effected, the troops being unaccustomed to time their marches, so that some were obliged to be halted to await their turn, having reached the crossing place too soon in their eagerness. The Dragoon Brigade arrived at 6 p.m. on the 20th, and had to wait eighteen hours, the men being all that time in full marching order.

On the 21st the various corps concentrated on a hill some seven miles in extent as follows : the

Dragoon Brigade at the village of Tursk-Sliva, the remainder at the villages of Tsarevitsa and Sara-Yar.

Before marching out of Sistova several of the corps were paraded before the Emperor and the Commander-in-Chief. While inspecting the camp of the Rifle Brigade, the latter pointed to the mountains looming in the distance, and said, "Rifles, yonder serious work is in store for you: mind your feet, and keep your chests well out." His words came true, for all the time they were kept at it in the Balkans.

Scarcely had the force halted for a rest, when Bulgarians came in from all sides begging to be protected against the Bashi-Bazouks, and parties were at once sent out in the directions indicated by them. But the danger proved to be imaginary, the Bulgarians having invented these stories so as to get at any rate a few soldiers among them for their protection in case the Turks should come. At first, however, they were believed, and not only were parties sent out, but in addition to the ordinary sentinels, a cordon of them was posted round the camp at night, as it was supposed that a night attack was to be feared.

Let us now see what the Turks were about all this time.

Immediately after the passage of the Danube by our troops, Réuf Pasha was ordered to Slivno, and a special corps formed under his command to defend the line of the Balkans from Shipka to Slivno. In all thirty-four battalions and a proportionate number of Circassians and Bashi-Bazouks were placed at his disposal.

These troops were at first disposed as follows : five battalions as an advance guard at Tirnova ; eleven battalions and a field battery at Shipka and Kazanlik ; three battalions between Esekji and Tvarditsa at Khainkoi ; two at Demir Kapa, and lastly, as a general reserve at Slivno, thirteen battalions, three squadrons of regular cavalry, about 1000 Circassians, three field and one mountain battery ; in all thirty-four battalions, three squadrons, about 1500 Circassians, five batteries, and a considerable number of Bashi-Bazouks. Their exact strength is not known, but reckoning the battalions on an average at 600, and the squadrons at 100, we get 22,000 men, not including the Bashi-Bazouks.

Behind this force there were no troops nearer than Adrianople, but almost in the centre of the long line of forty-four miles held by it, viz. at Yeni Zagra, there was a line of railway by which it could be rapidly

reinforced. And there can be no doubt that had we moved less rapidly, and had our advance into the mountains been known at once, Réuf Pasha would have received more or less important reinforcements. But the speed and secrecy of our movements, and our unexpected appearance in the plain of the Tundja did not leave Réuf time to concentrate and bar our passage into the Balkans.

Directly after the passage of the Danube by our army, and the commencement of the advance of Gurko's force on Tirnova, the Minister of War, Redif Pasha, and Namik Pasha were sent to Shumla to hinder as far as possible the passage of the Balkans. They reported on the 26th July that sixteen battalions had marched with this object the day before from Rustchuk, to Kirech-Chesimé. Six battalions had been moved from Osman Bazar to reinforce the five occupying Tirnova. Four more which had arrived at Yeni Zagra under Rassim Pasha and Mehemet Khulussi Bey, had been ordered to Shipka, which they were to reach on the 26th June. At the same time it was pointed out that it was essential that the forces of Suleiman Pasha should be moved as rapidly as possible from Montenegro by Deli Agach to Adrianople, and that all the disposable troops from



GEN. GURKO'S ADVANCE GUARD IN 1877 25

Sukhum, Batum, the 5th Corps District, and elsewhere should be assembled at Constantinople. At last the Sultan determined to unfurl the flag of the Prophet, and so rouse the people to arms. Hence we see that the crossing of the Danube and the advance of Gurko's force had produced a great impression on the Turks, and evoked energetic measures on their part for the assembling of a sufficient force. But time was required for carrying out these measures, and an energetic Commander-in-Chief, while Abdul Kerim remained totally inactive.

On the 22nd June Gurko's force continued its advance, our cavalry moving in three columns ; the right, the Composite Brigade, towards Selvi, the centre, the Dragoon Brigade, through Akchair, Gornyi Studen, and Batak, and the left or Don Brigade along the Tirnova highroad.

That same day the Composite Brigade occupied Orcha Mogila, the Dragoon Brigade reached Batak, and the Cossack Brigade was at Yebeli. The infantry advanced to Akchair. Our line of outposts and reconnoitring parties extended some nineteen miles, and the country was patrolled some twelve miles in advance. The Bulgarians everywhere greeted our troops with enthusiasm, and cheerfully offered them

all they had. In the places where the inhabitants were Turks measures had to be taken to disarm them, which in most cases was effected without much resistance.

On the 23rd the force halted. Next day the advance was resumed, no enemy nor armed inhabitants being met with, and we occupied the following points : left column, Sakhandol, on the road to Selvi ; centre column, Murad Bey Koi ; left column, Nikup ; main body, Batak. On the right flank communication was opened with the Cossack Brigade of the Caucasus, while on the left Gurko wished them to get into touch with the 12th Cavalry Division.

That day, as the Rifle Brigade was moving on Batak, the troops for the first time saw their commander. Having saluted them, General Gurko addressed them thus : "The fame of the army is in your hands." "Glad to do our best, your Excellency," was the reply.¹ "You see those blue mountains?" resumed the General ; "you must take them, you must fly over them like eagles." "We will try, your Excellency," was the hearty response.

The impression produced on all by the commander

¹ This is the ordinary regulation reply.—Ed.

was a favourable one. He was attended by Major Liegnitz, of the Prussian General Staff, who was to be attached to the Rifles, and who was here presented to the commanders of battalions, astonishing everybody by his knowledge of Russian.

Up to the 24th June the information received through the cavalry led us to suppose that Tirnova was occupied by the enemy and was being fortified. The day previous the Chief of the Staff of Gurko's force, in a note to the officer holding the same position in the 8th Corps informing him that the place was occupied by five or six tabors with artillery, and that reinforcements were expected from Osman Bazar, said that to attack the place with a certainty of success, the whole Advance Guard and a brigade of the 8th Corps would be necessary, i.e. sixteen battalions with their complement of artillery. This information was not far removed from the truth, for there were in the place five tabors with six mountain guns and 400 cavalry, while six battalions under Savfet Pasha were on their way from Osman Bazar. But there was no means of confirming the information because of the parties of Bashi-Bazouks, so that some definite conclusion was yet to be arrived at. In view of the importance of the town of Tirnova, the key to the

passes of the Balkans, the commander of the Advance Guard determined to make a reconnaissance in force in that direction on the 25th and 26th. To this end the following dispositions were made. The Dragoon Brigade (three squadrons of the Astrakhan Regiment and two and a half of the Kazan, with the half squadron of the Guards and the 16th Horse Battery) was despatched from Murad Bey Koi by Mikhaltzy, Yalar, Karabunar, and Bielokovtsy to Tirnova. As regards the Composite Brigade, the 9th Hussars with two guns of the 10th Don Battery were sent to Mikhaltzy to act as reserve to the Dragoons. Colonel Chernozubov's Cossack Brigade was to send four sotnias of the 26th to the west of Tirnova to support the Dragoons in case of necessity. The rest of the force was to stand fast. On the 26th General Gurko proposed to move with the Don Brigade from Nikup, to reconnoitre Tirnova on the east.

On the 25th he came to Murad Bey Koi to keep an eye on the Dragoon Brigade and find out for himself what was going on at Tirnova. He arrived exactly at six in the morning, attended among others by Prince Battenberg. Having heard Prince Evgeniye's report as to the information brought in, and having

made acquaintance with the regimental commanders, he mounted his horse and went to inspect the brigade. Having greeted the troops, in his resonant, energetic voice he addressed each body in a few stirring words. "You, officers, I remind that no Russian soldier ever deserted his commander, so that if you lead, the men will follow. As for you, spoiled children of the Tsar," he cried to the Guards, "you must merit the special favour of our father and benefactor, and if need be, give your lives for him to the last man. Dragoons! Remember what an honour has fallen to your lot. You have been chosen from the whole Russian army to be the first to cross the Balkans. Show that you have deserved the confidence of your master, and act as heroes. Artillerymen, remember to fire seldom, but with effect!"

The General knew how to appeal to the most sacred feelings of his countrymen, and their hearts beat high with noble aspirations. On the faces of many of the men emotion was clearly visible. Passing Mikhaltzy and Yalar, the Dragoon Brigade made for Karabunar. About twelve o'clock General Gurko observed from the top of a high hill near that place on the far side of the plain a large body of Turkish cavalry. As the descent of the hill was exceedingly

difficult, the force could not advance till it was known what the strength of the enemy was.

In order to make the enemy turn, and so show his strength, at first only a section of the Guards was sent down into the plain, under Captain Savin, the rest of the column being halted, with the exception of two guns of the 16th Battery which were pushed forward to the brow of the hill in support of the Guards, escorted by the 2nd squadron of the Kazan regiment, dismounted. The enemy, over 300 strong, moved against our detachment, which was now advancing at increased speed. But, seeing the superiority of the enemy, and that the latter wished to surround him, Captain Savin halted, retreated some little way, dismounted his men and opened fire on the enemy, who followed his example. The remainder of the Guards and two squadrons of Dragoons were successively sent down to support their comrades. The Turks on seeing this wheeled about and made for Tirnova. The horse artillery section opened on them and turned their retreat into flight. As it was now clear that the flying cavalry were the only troops the enemy had at hand, the remaining squadrons of Dragoons, the 16th Battery, and two sotnias of the Don Cossack regiment were sent down the hill towards

Tirnova. The remaining sotnia and two horsed guns remained on the hill to keep the road open. By four in the afternoon the column was approaching Tirnova, the northern road being chosen, as the most convenient and as lying highest.

The force advanced in the following order. In the first line the Guards and two squadrons of Dragoons, covered by a line of skirmishers. In rear, in the centre of the line, was a squadron of Dragoons. In the second line were the remaining five Dragoon squadrons, three sotnias, and the four guns of the 16th Battery.

The town of Tirnova lies in the low plain of the Yantra, surrounded to the east and west by heights of some importance, the west bank being lower than the east. At our approach the enemy evacuated the place and retreated to the south, taking up a position on the right bank of the river, from which he opened fire from his guns on our troops. On the road to Osman Bazar a large column was also visible, moving towards the east. Thus the garrison had retreated in two directions, the smaller body southward, and the larger eastward.

All this showed that the enemy was afraid of us, and did not care to face our attack. Consequently

General Gurko determined to turn his reconnaissance into an advance in earnest, and at once occupy the town. In pursuance of this intention the 16th Battery was brought into action and four squadrons of Dragoons dismounted, and pushed forward to cover its flanks. At the same time the rear-guard was called in from the hill, as there was plainly no reason to fear that our communications would be cut.

It was very difficult to bring the battery into action, as the country was laid out in vineyards and intersected by stone walls; it had to move by a narrow path and then, turning to the left, advance in column, thus exposing its right flank to the enemy's fire. The Turkish battery at once opened on ours, firing very rapidly and with good aim. In spite of these disadvantages Lieut.-Colonel Orens brought his guns coolly into action and opened a well-directed fire. Soon that of the enemy's battery ceased, the position was abandoned, and the guns retreated along the Osman Bazar road. Then our battery opened on the enemy's infantry, who had been firing in a desultory way at our dragoons and artillery alike. It was plain that the enemy was retiring, so the force was ordered to advance, one sotnia of the Don

regiment being sent forward at a trot to seize the town. This made the enemy abandon his position and retreat in great haste. The Guards, two squadrons of Dragoons, two sotnias, and two guns were sent in pursuit under Colonel Konvo. Reaching the right bank of the Yantra, the guns opened on the retreating columns, which soon took to flight, throwing away their arms, pouches, and accoutrements. So hasty was their retreat that the governor of the town, Said Pasha, fled on foot in the direction of Elena, not waiting for his horse. The whole camp fell into our hands, and in it were found great quantities of munitions of war and provisions, many guns, and a flag. The Turks retreated to Osman Bazar, where they effected a junction with Savfet Pasha's brigade. They had had in action five battalions, 400 Arnaut cavalry, and six mountain guns. The prisoners declared that towards the end of the engagement three more battalions from Shumla reached Leskovitse, three miles east of the town, but hearing of their comrades' retreat, followed their example. Apparently this was Savfet Pasha's brigade, which had been ordered to reinforce Tirnova. Abdul Kerim had ordered the garrison to hold out to the last, saying that Savfet was advancing with all

speed. Our losses were two rank and file wounded of the 16th Battery, and eight horses. We were met by the inhabitants with the greatest enthusiasm.

CHAPTER II.

Preparations for crossing the Balkans—Passage of the Khainkoi Pass—Taking of the village of Khainkoi—Affair at Konare—Reconnaissances of our cavalry on the 3rd July.

DIRECTLY after the occupation of Tirnova, General Gurko ordered the remainder of his force to march on that place. Accordingly at seven in the morning of the 26th the Rifles and Bulgarian Contingent started from Batak. The heat was terrible. The men got dreadfully tired, and so faint from thirst that they could not be kept from drinking from every pond they passed. They dipped it up in their caps, poured it over their necks, wetted their heads, and sluiced each other with it. On the 27th the two corps made their triumphal entry into the old Bulgarian capital. The commander of the force and a crowd of Bulgarians met them outside the town.

The whole population of the town was assembled in the main street, through which the troops passed with General Gurko at their head. The windows,

balconies, and roofs were crowded with spectators, who showered the troops with flowers and garlands, some hanging them on their rifles, sabres, and the necks of their horses. The children sang the national anthem in chorus. The singing, the ceaseless cries of "Hurrah!" "Bravo!" "Long live the Tsar Alexander and his warriors!" "Welcome!" &c., were mingled with plaudits, hand-shakings, and kisses. In a word, the enthusiasm of the Bulgarians was whole-hearted, and every participator in the entry felt they were the happiest moments of his life. The clergy, with a deputation from the town, awaited the troops at the Konak, in front of which divine service was performed. After this Gurko addressed the Bulgarian "drujiny" as follows: "I congratulate you, my brothers, on your entry into your old capital, recovered by the Russian forces. I am convinced that you will now know how to defend it, especially as you have the good fortune to be under the command of Russian officers." A hearty "hurrah" was the response to this speech, translated into Bulgarian by one of the officers.

Having passed through the town, the troops bivouacked on the Osman Bazar road. None had fallen out, though the march had been very tiring,

and the heat as great as on the previous day. The disposition of the force was now as follows:— Main body in and around Tirnova; Dragoon Brigade at Merdan; towards Osman Bazar, at Pushevo, Don Regiment, No. 30, with two guns; at the meeting of the roads to Gabrovo and Elena, the Don Brigade and its horse battery; one sotnia posted along the Yantra. The transport, under the escort of the 3rd Brigade of the Bulgarian Contingent and two guns at Reshen, was behind Tirnova. The force remained so till the 30th June, while information was being collected, and a supply train formed.

On the very day of the occupation of Tirnova two parties were sent out; one of forty men of the Kiev Hussars under Cornet Plieshkov to Selvi, and the other, a troop of the 30th Don Regiment, under Captain Afanasiev, to open up communication with the Caucasus Cossack Brigade. Plieshkov, finding that Selvi was held by a company of gendarmerie, rode rapidly into the town with his party, and appeared suddenly before the panic-stricken Turks, disarmed them, made for the telegraph station, seized the telegraphic apparatus and code, and returned to Tirnova.

Not less bold and decisive was the conduct of Afanasiev. In trying to find the Caucasus Brigade, he found himself at Plevna. Entering the town, he came upon a half company of Turkish infantry, whom he ordered so authoritatively to lay down their arms that they did so at once. In another part of the town he came on the other half of the company, which he likewise disarmed. But hearing that a considerable body of Circassians was not far off, he left Plevna and marched to Bulgaren, where he arrived during the night and found the brigade. Having passed the night there, he returned next morning to Tirnova, having made some 150 miles in three days. On the 26th the Dragoon Brigade was sent out to learn the movements of the Turkish force that had retreated from Tirnova, with orders to move along the Osman Bazar road as far as Dobridol. Parties sent out by the brigade found that the Turks had retreated to Kozrov, where they had over 2000 men with six guns, and that that very day they had marched to Osman Bazar, where there were fifteen battalions.

On the 27th inst. parties of the 8th Uhlan Regiment came in from the Rustchuk force, with which communication was thus opened.

The total information obtained as regards the enemy was as follows. All the Turkish authorities and inhabitants had fled from Tirnova, and mostly in the direction of Shumla. At the former place, Dranovo, and Gabrovo, the Turks had left vast stores of grain, which we had of course seized. Of all the passes to which roads lead from Tirnova, that of Shipka alone was held by the Turks, the others being not even watched. Up to the 27th June there had been only 200 Mustaphis at Shipka, but on that day troops from Arabia reached there, some five battalions, with mountain guns and crowds of Bashi-Bazouks. It was proposed to place Krupp guns in the works, but whether these had arrived was not known, though the road had been prepared for their transit from Kazanlik. There were considerable forces in the valley of the Tundja, between Kazanlik and Slivno, but the passes had not been occupied by them.

Fairly strong entrenchments had been raised at Shipka by the Turks. No estimate, even approximate, could be formed of the strength of their force. The information given by the Bulgarians could not be relied on unless verified, except as regards the passes, touching which it was clear and accurate

enough. The best and most frequented were the Shipka and the two Elenas, one of which leads to Tvarditsa, the other to Slivno. The most difficult was accounted that of Khainkoi, it being a proverb that "Ill luck awaits him who crosses the Khainkoi Pass." After consideration, General Gurko decided to adopt this route, feeling sure that on it he would meet with the least resistance, and relying on the ability of his men to overcome all obstacles, no matter how great.

The information received was very near to the truth. We learn from Turkish records that on the 27th June the Turkish forces were only just beginning to assemble at Shipka. Moreover at that time the Turkish authorities were more alarmed for Slivno than Shipka, as may be seen from the communications that passed between the Chancery and the Minister of War. The Vali of Adrianople had reported that the enemy was certainly moving on Slivno, so that it was proposed to despatch two battalions to that place. But by the 29th the Chancery drew attention to the importance of Shipka, and thought it imperative that more troops should be sent there. The Minister of War replied that more troops would be of no use there,

while the other passes were not occupied at all.

On the strength of his information General Gurko formed his plan, which was approved by the Commander-in-Chief. The chief grounds for it were the effect which the unexpected appearance of a force in the plain of the Tundja would have on the Turks. He proposed, after emerging into that plain and securing himself in the Yeni Zagra and Slivno quarter, to turn westward with his force and, occupying Kazanlik, to take the Turks who held the Shipka Pass in rear. To secure the success of this plan he proposed to make two cavalry demonstrations, one by Gabrovo towards Shipka, and the other by Elena towards Bebrovo and Slivno. Both these detachments were to circulate reports that large forces of Russians were following them, and the Bulgarians were to take care that these reports reached the Balkans.

For this purpose it was determined (1) to choose the Khainkoi route, leading from Tirnova to Khainkoi in the plain of the Tundja, a route not marked in any map. (2) To move the whole force by this route except the 30th Don Regiment and two guns, that regiment sending two squadrons with the guns

to Gabrovo to watch the pass from that place to Kazanlik, the remaining squadrons being left at Tirnova. (3) That the force should leave at Tirnova all its baggage under the escort of a composite detachment drawn from all the corps composing it, only taking with it the pack-horse train organized during the halt.

The force was to be provisioned by requisitions. There was abundance of cattle in the country to be traversed, so that they could not well starve, but there might be difficulties about the supply of bread, though only while on the march, for when they halted they expected to get it in sufficient quantities from the towns and villages. It had been shown in the case of Tirnova that a small force could always do so, but in case of accidents, biscuit for five days was provided, which was not to be used without the express order of the commander. Besides it was reckoned probable that we should capture some provisions from the Turks, a hope which was amply realized. In the valley of the Tundja our men fed on meat at the expense of the Turks, and on the whole they fared not only well, but luxuriously. There was abundant forage for the horses, still it was thought advisable to take a three days' supply of barley.

As many cartridges as possible were to be carried by the men, thirty spare rounds being carried in their pockets, or ninety in all. This was of course not sufficient for any emergency, but it was impossible to take the carts over the passes. The artillery had its service complement of projectiles, which it was out of the question to supplement, so that its ammunition had to be used more sparingly than that of the infantry.

The advance was to be made in the following order:—Advance Guard, the Mounted Engineer detachment, two days in advance of the main body. Main Body, the Rifle Brigade with mountain artillery, two brigades of the Bulgarian Contingent, two companies of Cossacks, the Guards troop, one Ural squadron, the Dragoon Brigade, and the Don Brigade. Rear-Guard, a brigade of the Bulgarian Contingent, and the Kiev Hussar Regiment. The rear-guard was to remain at Tirnova till relieved by the 8th Corps.

When the passage into the plain of the Tundja near Khainkoi should be seized, General Gurko intended to move on Kazanlik, so as to take the Shipka Pass in the rear from the south, while the two squadrons and two guns left at Gabrovo were

to make a demonstration in front. In order to draw the attention of the Turks towards the east on the 29th, three squadrons of Cossacks and two guns were sent from Tirnova to Elena and Bebrovo, under Colonel Chernozubov.

It must be remarked that these dispositions were kept quite secret for the time, and no one knew whither the force was bound. On the 30th, the orders contained instructions for attaching parties of rank and file to the guns. All the time of the passage of the pass, every gun was to have ten men attached to it, from the infantry or cavalry, according to the arm with which the artillery was serving, to help its detachment in getting it along.

The orders to the main body, which was under the command of Major-General Tsvietsinsky, laid stress on the following points. To impress on the men that they must use their best energies and strength of will in pursuance of the object in view. There must be no stragglers or falling out. Those who were really ill would be sent to the nearest village, to be cared for by the inhabitants. Singing, talking, and smoking were forbidden to all ranks, without special leave.

The command of the cavalry was placed in the hands of a single officer, Prince Nicolai Maximil-

ianovich being appointed sole commander on the 29th June, with Lieut.-Colonel Sukhotin as his chief of the staff.

All plans and dispositions having been made, General Gurko sent on the 29th June the following report to the Commander-in-Chief:—

“TIRNOVA, 29th June. Your Imperial Highness,—Yesterday, at six in the morning, I had the honour to send to your Highness by Lieutenant Mukhanov a detailed report of all the information received by me touching the enemy's movements. To-day, thank God, I have received confirmation and expansion of this intelligence. Yesterday evening a Bulgarian from Gabrovo came to me, a student of Moscow University, a man to all appearance very energetic, and gave me the following information. On Monday there arrived at Shipka Pass troops from Arabia (some say two, some three, some five battalions) and a horde of Bashi-Bazouks. All the Turkish officials without exception have left Gabrovo and Travno, and the Bulgarians have armed themselves as best as they could, and blocked the road right up to the Turkish entrenchments, which are a long way from being finished, and, what is more

important, not yet armed, though they were meant to be so with Krupp guns, with which view the road from Kazanlik to the Pass has been levelled. Up to Monday there were only 200 Mustaphis at the Pass. No one knows whether the Arabian troops have any guns. The roads leading round the Pass are not only not fortified, but not even watched by the Bashi-Bazouks, through fear of the neighbouring population.

“From Shumla comes one report after another, that everyone is fleeing thither for his life. I am spreading a report that I am marching on Elena and Bebrovo, but my real plan is, now that the pioneer detachment reports having reached Pliakovo at nine last evening, to break up my camp at three to-morrow morning, with the Dragoon, Cossack and Rifle Brigades, four ‘drujinas’ of Bulgarians, and one regiment of the Composite Brigade, and move by Pliakovo and Parovtsy to Khainkoi, making as long a march the first day as the heat and the exhaustion of my men will allow. The next day I shall cross the Balkans, leaving two or three battalions of Bulgarians along the line, as circumstances may require ; with the remainder I shall turn towards Slivno and make for Kazanlik, where I shall arrive on the morning of the 3rd at the latest.

“That same day (viz. 30th June), the commander of the Cossack squadron, which was this morning despatched to Gabrovo, will demonstrate in full force against the Shipka Pass, while the Bulgarian who was with me yesterday evening will receive from him a sealed envelope in which I tell him my intentions and request that the Bulgarians will give the Turks to understand that there is Lord knows what behind the squadron in question. Then, if I succeed in occupying Kazanlik and the Pass, and the route I take across the Balkans appears unsuitable for the passage of an army, I will leave the ‘drujina’ there to patrol in small parties, and with the rest of my force take up a defensive position at Kazanlik and Shipka. The rest depends on Providence.

“As for provisions, I am living at the expense of the town, which has kept us three days for nothing. I am taking five days’ supply of biscuit, and three days’ quota of forage, to be kept for a rainy day, but propose to live on the country. Here I have a huge store of grain and two mills to grind it. At Drianovo and Gabrovo there are also large stores ; on the former our seal has been already placed, and will be on the latter to-day. Bread has been prepared at Pliakovo for my force. Everything is

to be had, but a commissariat officer is needed, and mine has vanished without leaving any trace. However, the army is provided for several days. I am afraid to calculate how many exactly, not having time to verify the quantity in store. One cannot do everything oneself.

“GURKO, Lieut.-General.”

The evening before the force was to start, when all dispositions were already made, the following letter was received from General Levitski, assistant to the chief of the staff of the army:—

“DEAR SIR,—The Grand Duke has directed me to communicate to your Excellency that he fully approves your proposals and dispositions for seizing the passes through the Balkans, but at the same time he desires you to understand that you must without fail confine yourself to merely seizing the passes and their outlets, and move no further without orders. In support of your movement against the Shipka Pass H.I.H. will send from Tirnova to Gabrovo on the 2nd July a regiment of infantry and a battery from the 2nd brigade of the 9th Division, which is to arrive at Tirnova to-morrow, the 30th June.

"The 8th Corps will be disposed as follows : one brigade of the 9th Division will occupy Tirnova, one regiment will be sent along the Osman Bazar road, and one to Gabrovo, or Shipka, as circumstances require.

"The 14th Infantry Division will remain for the present round Barush, on the Yantra, and at the bridge over the Russita.

"But in this way, till the 3rd—4th of July, there will be only one Cossack regiment with the corps, and that quite exhausted.

"Therefore I should be glad to hear from you why you halted the Kiev Hussar regiment at Tirnova, and whether it can be utilized for reconnoitring the country in the direction of Osman Bazar, for the time being, till the 3rd Cavalry Division arrives.

"In what direction do you wish to move the Bulgarian battalions left at Tirnova? Should they not march to Gabrovo and Shipka on the 1st July, so that reaching the Pass before the regiment of the 9th Division, they may occupy Gabrovo on the 2nd and the 3rd, begin the attack on Shipka and draw the attention of the Turks, while you are advancing from Kazanlik?

"29th June.

KAZ. LEVITSKI."

This letter somewhat disturbed General Gurko, as it pointed to the possibility of his force being weakened by two "drujinas" and one Hussar regiment. The force was weak enough already, and its position in the Valley of the Tundja, in view of the superior numbers of the Turks, very hazardous. Consequently, in two letters sent by him to the Commander-in-Chief, he begged him not to hold back those corps, but allow them to follow in the train of the main column, as he could not do without them. His wish was granted, and they joined the force at Khainkoi.

On the other hand, the order to halt at Kazanlik, at the outlet from the mountains, was in no way more agreeable to Gurko. No doubt, while the mountains had yet to be traversed, it was impossible to form any plans for further operations, as the task already set the force was sufficiently onerous, and nothing was known of the circumstances in which it might find itself when the passes had been seized by it. Yet to deprive it of its liberty of action at a time when it was divided from the main body by a range of mountains of such importance, when the asking of leave to undertake any given movement would imply serious loss of time, and when its sole strength lay in

freedom of action, seemed sufficiently risky. On the other hand, to leave the Turkish columns on the south of the Karadja Dagħ within such a short distance of Kazanlik and Khainkoi was equally dangerous. Still more so was it to leave in the hands of the Turks the town of Yeni Zagra, which, lying on the line of railway, formed an excellent base for sending forward reinforcements and collecting supplies and munitions of war. As it is only fifteen and a half miles from Khainkoi, the possession of such an important strategical point seemed indispensable, and without it the work of seizing the passes seemed incomplete.

In view of these considerations, Gurko wrote from his camp near Tsarovtsy, at two o'clock on the 1st July, to the Grand Duke, representing "that, to enable him, after occupying Khainkoi, to advance on Kazanlik without fears for his communications, it would be desirable that the ascent from Khainkoi should be occupied by a brigade at least of the 8th Corps, and that the place itself should be occupied by a portion of that Corps by the evening of the 3rd July. Then he would be able, with fair assurance of safety, to advance to Maglish on the 4th July, and on the 5th attack Kazanlik. It would be well to threaten the front of Shipka on the 4th or 5th July.

The occupation of the two passes and of Kazanlik would certainly have a great moral effect on the Turkish population, to advance further, to Philippopolis or Hermanly, would be wrong, and could not be done unless the Pass was secured behind him. Once in the plain and with the passes secured, his cavalry and artillery were strong enough to ensure the success of his operations, and his first endeavour would be to keep the Turks from planting themselves at Yeni Zagra. If the advance guard of the 8th Corps had once occupied the passes of the Balkans, he could halt where he was till the main body came up, utilizing the time to put the route to Khainkoi in a satisfactory condition."

By this communication General Gurko hoped, while leaving the defence of the passes to the 8th Corps, to secure a free hand for his force, the first use he meant to make of it being the occupation of Yeni Zagra, and driving the Turks beyond the Maritza. On the 30th, after Gurko had begun his advance, the Commander-in-Chief arrived at Tirnova, and was greeted with enthusiasm by the inhabitants.

On the 1st July, a deputation of Turks waited on H.I.H. to present an address of welcome, and express their sympathy with the Russian arms. It

consisted of the Vice-Governor of Dranovo, the First Secretary of the Tirnova Court, and two of the principal inhabitants. His Highness received the deputation graciously, bade them resume Divine service in the mosques, promised to look after the latter and the property of the peaceful inhabitants, and urged the members of it to restore among the population a feeling of security and confidence in the Russian army.

His Highness took the following measures to make the attack on Shipka easier for General Gurko. The remaining squadrons of the 30th Don Regiment were moved to Gabrovo with the exception of the 6th, which was sent to clear the country round the town from the Bashi-Bazouks, who were gathering there. Later the 36th Orlov Infantry Regiment, with a battery, was moved to Gabrovo. Thus, by the 30th June, we had in that place a force of three battalions, five squadrons, and ten guns (including two of the horse artillery which had been there before), under the command of Major-General Derojinski.

This force received orders to attack the enemy's position at Shipka from the north on the 5th July.

ADVANCE OF THE FORCE.

The road by which the force passed the Balkans, and which General Rauch's portion of it was deputed to put in good condition, presented great difficulties.

From Tirnova it first ran along the chaussée in the direction of the village of Debelitsa, but turned to the left after a couple of miles and wound towards Prisovo, up to which place it is fairly level. Beyond it the ground is hilly, and further on, near Plakovo, the road traverses a spur of the Balkans, which here reach a considerable height. Between these two points there was a very steep ascent over a stony slope, where the Turks had laid out a new road, but not completed it. From Plakovo the road ran at first along the foot of the mountains, but then began an ascent to the main chain of the Balkans to the next village, Tsarovtsy, and here it wound along steep ravines, thickly wooded with larches. After Tsarovtsy the ascent grew steeper and steeper, till at last it ended in a naked sandy hill-top where the Turks had a post. This part was the most difficult to traverse, it being hard enough work without fighting, while to drive an enemy from such a position would have been an arduous task indeed.

The descent was also steep. At the foot the road ran along a rapid mountain stream and, crossing it, again wound up by a steep ascent to the next hill-top. Some four miles from the exit of the pass the mountains opened out and formed a fairly wide plateau, but further on they drew together again and formed a terrible defile. As the road descended from the heights it emerged near the village of Khainkoi. The whole distance from Tirnova to that place is thirty-seven miles.

On the 28th June General Gurko sent forward General Rauch with the mounted engineers to explore the defile of Khainkoi and clear the road. They had with them some carts with dynamite and tools. Forty-eight hours of hard work enabled them to remove obstacles and make the road fit for the passage of the main body. Still, much remained to be done, and the route was extremely difficult to traverse.

It is amusing to note that the engineer, Colonel Roniker, set up a post on the summit of the pass with an inscription commemorating their passage, and his followers all cut their names on it.

PASSAGE OF THE BALKANS BY THE MAIN BODY.

General Gurko started from Tirnova on the 30th with the main body, his force being in all eight and a half battalions, seventeen squadrons, sixteen horse artillery and fourteen mountain guns. By eleven in the morning the whole force was at the rendezvous near Prisovo, and by three in the afternoon reached Plakovo, where a halt was called. From this point the road became very steep, and the four-wheeled artillery waggons began to drop behind. At every step the scenery grew more picturesque. The murmuring torrents, the thickly-wooded ravines, the endless range of hills and mountain tops made a panorama of great beauty. But serious obstacles were encountered, delaying the advance of the force materially. General Gurko writes thus of them to the Commander-in-Chief:—

“My departure from Tirnova took place, not at three but at nine in the morning, for my clumsy train, breaking down, or stopping at every step, took from seven in the morning till ten in the evening of yesterday to find its way into the place. We cannot dream of taking our regular transport into the Balkans, for it would never get up the hills. It is lucky that I have arranged to take only pack animals

with me. In consequence of having lost six precious morning hours, owing to the difficulty with the transport, I shall not reach Kazanlik till the 4th, instead of the 3rd. I shall not move beyond that place, in accordance with your Excellency's orders ; but I shall send out scouting parties in all directions."

. The main body halted for the night at Middle Kaliba, though its commander had hoped to reach Voinyesht that day, his late departure from Tirnova being the cause of the failure. Here he received a report from General Rauch that he had already traversed the Balkans, and was close to Khainkoi, where there was said to be a battalion with two guns. The road to Kaliba had proved very tolerable, and, with a little improvement, could, General Gurko reported, be traversed even by nine-pounder guns.

As no news had come in from the Cossacks sent to Elena, Lieut.-Colonel Frazay sent out patrols of dragoons in that direction. Some time later the Cossacks came into camp, having made fifty miles in two days and got as far as Bebrovo. Their commander reported there were no signs of the enemy about that place or Elena. His men had disarmed the inhabitants on the way, and exchanged shots with some Bashi-Bazouks. The night was cold and damp.

The next day (1st July) at seven o'clock, the main body resumed its march, and before long entered the Khainkoi defile. There the difficulties of the passage began, the ascent of steep and long slopes was exceedingly wearying for the horses and the men who were helping them; sometimes the road was so narrow that the guns and the men dragging them were very near falling over the precipice. Almost all the hauling was done by hand, and all day the mountains rang with the songs, without which the Russian never attempts hard work. "One, two, three—pull," was heard continually; the gun would move a few yards and then stop, and then it would be begun all over again. The ten extra men told off to each gun proved insufficient, and whole companies had to be used. Consider the ceaseless advance for three days, the tremendous heat, the poor food, little rest, and immense labour, and we may form some idea of the difficulties attending the march through the Khainkoi Pass. "None but Russian soldiers could have made such a march in the time, and dragged the guns through such a defile," was Gurko's report to the Grand Duke.¹

¹ Gen. Gurko had possibly not heard of Wellington's flank movement on Vitoria, or of Napoleon's over the St. Bernard.—Ed.

In this way, dragging the artillery almost the whole time by manual labour, and forced to stop at almost every step, the force covered some twelve and a half miles. About one o'clock on the 1st July, Gurko reached Tsarovtsy and called a long halt till five o'clock, to enable food to be cooked. At each halt, whether by day or night, the men got beef or mutton and fresh bread. They had to thank their commander for this, he sending his orderlies on ahead to buy up cattle and sheep in the villages, and make villagers bake. This solicitude was highly appreciated by the troops. "There is a general of the right sort," they cried; "he gives us good rest and good food too; we can go on for another sixty miles, if necessary."

Thus the commander did the work of the commissariat department. We have seen above that he reported that his commissary had vanished. Later on, at the halt at Tsarovtsy, he reported that he himself had done the defaulter's work during the five days at Tirnova. The commissary turned up on the fifth day, but disappeared again on the 30th June.

At five the force resumed its march, and faced the most troublesome part of the route. It was only

with the greatest difficulty that the guns could be got along, and two of them overbalanced and fell with their teams into the valley, though luckily we managed to drag them out again. The ammunition waggons were even more troublesome, and demanded almost superhuman exertions. The movement would have been quite out of the question but for the previous labours of the pioneers.

By the evening of the 1st the General was already at the southern end of the Pass with all the infantry, four Cossack squadrons, and all the mountain guns. He passed the night nine miles from Khainkoi, the remainder of the cavalry and the horse artillery spending it on the other side of the Pass, and the troop of Guards in the Pass itself. In this extended order the force took its rest where night found it. Like the previous one, it was cold and damp. The men were not allowed to smoke or light fires, or cook their food.

When it was barely light next morning the march was resumed under similar difficulties. The order of march of the main body was as follows:—Two companies of Cossack infantry, the two mountain batteries, the 14th, 13th, 16th and 15th Rifle battalions, and the Cossack squadrons. The road

descended at a sharp angle from the summit of the Pass to the rocky bed of the Seliner. Along this the troops marched for miles, splashing and scrambling from stone to stone. The wild, overhanging cliffs of the defile opened out in places, and then the road formed a charming walk, looking as if it had been sanded expressly for the troops. But this was not for long: the mountains closed in again, and the road once more was nothing but the rocky bed of the stream. The advance was finished in utter darkness, as that of the grave; only the glowworms gave signs of life. Night fell: it was terrible under the cover of the primæval trees in the narrow defile, closed in on all sides by huge cliffs. Man seemed so insignificant amidst this wild and grand scene, while at every moment our men expected to come in contact with the Turks. The thought plainly caused a certain tremor. The questions, "Are there many of them yonder? Shall we be a match for them? And if not, what then?" passed round. The end of the defile was close at hand. Here was the last bend, and there was the plain.

OCCUPATION OF THE EXIT OF THE KHAINKOI DEFILE.

While the main body was slowly moving on, General Gurko with the advance guard, consisting of the Rifles, two companies of Cossack infantry, a mountain battery, and four squadrons of the 26th Don regiment reached Khainkoi about ten o'clock, where he surprised about 300 Anatolian Nizams. But for four mounted men, who saw our force approaching, the detachment would have been taken prisoners as they stood. The occupation of the exit of the Pass came about thus. About ten in the morning of the 2nd July our troops first appeared in the plain of the Tundja, the "plain of roses." Issuing from the defile the two companies of infantry deployed as skirmishers, followed by the mountain battery, supported by the 14th Rifles, formed in two lines of company columns. The battery came into action at the gallop, and opened fire on the enemy's camp; the 1st and 2nd companies of the Rifles advanced, took ground to the right of the battery, and made a circuit to the south of Khainkoi, while the 3rd and 4th companies advanced to the left of the battery, nearer the foot of the Balkans. To the right of the 14th, the 16th battalion was pushed forward, while the 13th and

15th remained in reserve. A squadron of Cossacks was sent to watch our right flank, and, after exchanging a few shots with some armed natives, occupied the village of Esekji. The 3rd and 4th companies of the 14th had a slight exchange of shots with the enemy, who abandoned his camp and retreated to Konare. The remaining companies passed round the village of Khainkoi without seeing an enemy. Subsequently the village was occupied by a company of the 13th battalion. After a faint resistance the Turks fled in the direction of Slivno, and were pursued by two rifle battalions with two mountain guns and four squadrons of the 26th regiment. The whole camp, with the food still hot in the saucepans, fell into our hands.

While the infantry was thus engaged with the enemy, four squadrons of the 26th issued from the defile at a trot and advanced along the bed of the Seliner to Esekji, to cut off the enemy's retreat to Kazanlik. But on nearing Esekji they were fired upon, so a portion of them were dismounted, and that village and Makhala stormed. Driven from the villages, the armed inhabitants still kept up their fire to cover the retreat of their waggons. Hereupon the Cossacks charged the latter and seized

eighty waggons, losing two killed and three wounded. They subsequently bivouacked near Esekji and received orders to watch the road to Kazanlik and that running south from Esekji.

Having thus driven off the Turks, Gurko determined to confine himself to securing the exit from the defile, as the remainder of his force was still traversing the Pass, and the movement went on very slowly. Accordingly the Cossack infantry and the 14th Rifles were to move to Khainkoi and, throwing out a chain of piquets, stand fast there until further orders.

Thus by the morning of the 2nd July the southern issue of the Balkans was in our hands, and Gurko halted at Khainkoi village to get his forces well in hand. It was not till eleven in the morning that the Cossack Brigade was able to commence its descent from the crest of the Pass, and the Dragoon Brigade, which was immediately in its rear, had to wait till eight in the evening. Then Prince Eugene moved forward with the Kazan regiment only, and passed the Cossack Brigade. At last, with great difficulty, the troops were collected in the bivouac at Khainkoi.

AFFAIR AT KONARY VILLAGE (2ND JULY).

Scarcely had the 14th Rifles established themselves at the village of Khainkoi and thrown out piquets, when shots were heard in the direction of the enemy. The outposts reported that the Turks were advancing and that firing had begun, which was especially hot on the left flank. Hereupon the battalion moved out in support in company columns in two lines, sending word to the brigadier. But seeing a Turkish encampment on the road to Konary, Colonel Bejanov advanced against it.

He threatened its right flank and the Turks abandoned it, and the Rifles pursued them beyond the village. They then halted, threw out outposts, and retired to the Turkish camp. General Tsviet-sinski now came up with the 3rd company of the 13th and a section of a horse artillery battery, and having arranged for the battalion to retire on Khainkoi when the food had been cooked, he returned to the reserve. In the Turkish encampment were found, among other things, twelve large copper kettles, with water boiling in them, while sheep lay ready to be cut up, and butter, rice, and macaroni lay close at hand. Cooks were at once selected, and by

six o'clock a very tasty dinner was prepared. No sooner had the men begun their meal than the outposts reported that the Turks were again advancing. "Leave the kettles, at once," cried the battalion commander, "or the Turks will be supping on the remains of your dinner."

It appeared that the enemy, having received reinforcements, were advancing to the attack from the Tvarditsa side. The outposts of the 14th Rifles, as the enemy appeared to be more than two battalions strong, opened fire on them and began to retire on Konary. Colonel Bejanov at once advanced with his whole force. Before it reached the village, Kozog-madi, our advance guard faced about and opened fire, continuing it till the arrival of the reinforcements from Khainkoi. When the 15th Rifles came up, the enemy began to retreat. We followed them only as far as Tvarditsa, as the darkness came on and orders were received to spend the night at Konary, and in the morning retire to the vineyards in front of Khainkoi.

The trophies of this engagement were the two camps between Esekye and Tvarditsa, in which we found arms, cartridges, and reserves of uniform and accoutrements, surgical instruments, and bandages ;

seven prisoners were taken. The enemy, whose force amounted to four battalions (two Egyptian and two of Anatolian Nizams), retreated to Slivno and Kazanlik. Our losses were one killed and six seriously wounded, all rank and file.

Thus our entry into the plain of the Tundja was secured very cheaply. The Turks had four battalions round Khainkoi, and, no doubt, if they had had time to prepare for defence, we should have had greater losses. And if we remember that at Yeni Zagra, not far off, there were several more battalions which could have come to the rescue if they had been warned in time, it is certain that the whole success of our operations might have been endangered. It was only owing to the measures taken to conceal our movements, and the total unexpectedness of our appearance that we got off so cheaply, and were enabled with such slight sacrifices to complete the difficult operation of emerging from the Pass into the plain of the Tundja.

The moral result of our appearing in that plain was immense. A crowd of despatches came flying from Constantinople with anxious inquiries and hasty orders. It was resolved to replace the Minister of War, Redif Pasha, and the Commander-in-Chief,

Abdul Kerim, and to appoint Mehemet Ali in place of the latter. "In consequence of the ground covered by the enemy, the empire is between life and death," ran a despatch from the Sultan's Chancery on the 2nd July. That evening Recif Pasha sent to Khulussi Pasha a telegram ordering him to advance from Shipka to Kazanlik to meet the Russians. Accordingly the latter, on the morning of the 3rd, sent Reshid Bey with two battalions by Kazanlik to Maglish, leaving one battalion at Kazanlik, one and a half at the camp at Shipka village, and holding the Pass himself with six and a half battalions.

That day, at 2.10 p.m., General Gurko announced to the Commander-in-Chief his passage of the Balkans in the following terms :—

"I consider it my duty to bear witness to your Imperial Highness as to the incredible difficulties encountered by the troops under my command, in traversing this Pass, which owes so little to engineering skill. Especial difficulty was experienced in moving the horse artillery guns across it. As for the transit of the ammunition waggons, it demanded almost superhuman effort. None but Russian soldiers could have crossed it in three days, still less carried field artillery through such a difficult defile.

Justice demands that I should say that the Bulgarian Contingent was in no way behind the other troops in striving to overcome the difficulties of the passage. I have already reported to your Highness that General Rauch was sent forward with the mounted engineers to explore the Pass, and try to improve the road. This was done by him in a brilliant manner, and he to a marked degree facilitated the passage of the troops. I may safely say that, without his labours, the passage could not possibly have been made in three days. In my next report I shall present to your Highness sketches of the passage from Plakovo to Khainkoi. They were made by Captain Sakharov, of the general staff, and form, as one may say, a historic document. They were verified by me on my way through, and found strictly accurate."

On the 3rd July a halt was granted the force, as all the troops were not yet assembled, the Astrakhan dragoon regiment, a horse battery, and the Kiev Hussars only coming into camp on the afternoon of that day. But not all the troops were destined to enjoy the rest.

Only the first part of the operations necessary for the occupying of the passes was completed, and we at once proceeded to carry out the second part, the

occupation of the Kazanlik and Shipka Passes. The first step in this direction was to secure behind us the exit from that of Khainkoi. The operations to be conducted were no light matter, firstly because there was a considerable force about Kazanlik and Shipka, not less than ten battalions, or from 5000 to 6000 men, it was said. Secondly, we had to quit our only line of communication with the main body, that by Khainkoi, and move a distance of twenty-five miles, while considerable Turkish forces were at Yeni Zagra, only fifteen miles from the mouth of the pass. Besides, with the help of the railway, the Turks could largely reinforce the troops at Yeni Zagra. Consequently, to secure absolutely his sole line of communication, which was also his only line of retreat, it would have been necessary for Gurko to detach a very considerable force, while, apart from this, he had few enough men, and his operations on Kazanlik required the concentration of a considerable force, so that it was out of the question to leave many men at Khainkoi.

Under these circumstances he decided to make a feint on Yeni Zagra, and put them in a fright about the safety of that important point, and thus force them to give up the idea of attacking Khainkoi. Then, con-

cealing his movements by a thick screen of cavalry outposts, along the Karadja Dag, so as to prevent the Turks from finding out what was going on in the valley of the Tundja, and leaving the four Bulgarian battalions at Khainkoi, he would move with his remaining force on Kazanlik, and by seizing that town and the Shipka Pass as quickly as possible, open up another line of communication with the main body, which would also be another line of retreat.

With this view, and also to get intelligence of the enemy's movements, as what he had could not be relied on, Gurko sent out bodies of cavalry in three directions. Two squadrons of the 26th Cossacks moved out towards Slivno under Baron Korf; two of the same regiment towards Yeni Zagra, and a party of the 21st Don regiment made a reconnaissance in the direction of Kazanlik.

The first detachment was met near the village of Orezary by crowds of Bashi-Bazouks and Circassians, supported by three battalions of infantry with two guns. The Cossacks at once dismounted, opened fire, and sent for reinforcements, retiring slowly on the village of Zapauli. Here they received their first reinforcements in the shape of the squadron of the Ural regiment and the 4th squadron of the 26th.

At six in the evening the Kazan regiment of Dragoons and four guns of No. 10 Battery were sent to their assistance with a brigade of the Bulgarian Contingent. As soon as this force opened fire and advanced to the attack, the Turks fled in utter rout. The 4th squadron of the Kazan regiment was sent in pursuit, and on reaching Tvarditsa was stopped by the fire of the Turks, who had taken up a fresh position, though not for long. Major Teplov dismounted his squadron and part of the 1st squadron, and advanced with the bayonet, while the 10th Battery, taking ground further to the right of the village, opened on the enemy. The Turks, after a couple of volleys, did not stand their ground, but once more fled in confusion, pursued by the Dragoons and Cossacks, who did not draw rein till darkness fell, during which time they covered some seven miles, and captured a flag and part of the Turkish ammunition train.

The Dragoons returned at one in the morning and the Cossacks at two. The former had had no losses; the latter, one killed and three wounded.

As regards the two squadrons under Captain Martynov sent towards Yeni Zagra, they reached that place at two in the afternoon. A Turkish transport train

of eighty waggons with ammunition was seized and destroyed on the way to Khainkoi. On nearing the town, Captain Martynov sent forward two parties right and left of the town to cut the railway line and telegraph, but as they were fired on, they only succeeded in cutting the telegraph line between Yeni Zagra and Eski Zagra.

Subsequently a fresh attempt was made to cut the railway, the whole force moving round the enemy's position to the south, but *en route* it was attacked in flank by two squadrons of Circassians. They were driven off and pursued, but opening to right and left, suddenly left the Cossacks in face of a battery and a line of skirmishers which opened on them at 300 paces. Hereupon the Cossacks fell back and retreated to Kavlikoi. At ten in the evening they returned to the bivouac at Esekye, having lost three horses killed. The strength of the enemy, as discovered by this reconnaissance, was estimated at three battalions, a battery, and two squadrons of Circassians. They also reported that the whole population was fleeing on foot or by railway to Adrianople.

These two not very important cavalry skirmishes were of great value to the Advance Guard. In the first place we were masters of all the passes through



the Aladja Dagħ, and in the second, which was the most important, the Turks had been deluded into thinking that we meant to attack Yeni Zagra, and consequently waited for us to do so during the next few days, and made no attempt on Khainkoi, thus enabling Gurko to carry out, without interruption, his operations against Kazanlik and Shipka.

Lastly, the party under Captain Sysoco exchanged shots with the enemy near the village of Yaikanli, these being two companies of Reshid Bey's column of two battalions, sent by Khulussi Pasha from Shipka to Maglish. While the fusillade was going on the 21st Cossack regiment came up, whereupon the Turks retreated towards Kazanlik, and our men returned to Esekye.

Thus reconnaissances were carried out on the 3rd July in three directions to a distance of from twelve to twenty-five miles. We must remark that all three parties returned to camp the same evening without leaving detachments to watch the enemy, at least as far as we can discover from documentary evidence.

CHAPTER III.

Attack on Shipka—Affair at Uflani—Occupation of Kazanlik and the village of Shipka—Attack on the Shipka Pass by the Gabrovo force on the 5th July—Operations of the advance guard on the 6th July—Occupation of the Shipka Pass on the 7th July.

AFTER the reconnaissance described in the previous chapter, General Gurko determined on the 4th July to advance to Kazanlik, and then to Shipka. In order to mislead the Turks as to the strength of his force, he ordered his men to light as many camp-fires as possible the night before.

At seven in the morning of the 4th, the troops broke ground for Kazanlik. The movement was made in two columns. The right column, under Major-General Tsvietsinski, advanced along the main road at the foot of the Balkans by the village of Uflani, and consisted of the 4th Rifle Brigade, two companies of the Cossacks, a brigade of the Bulgarian contingent, two squadrons of the Don Cossack regiment, and ten Cossack horse artillery

guns, in all six and a half battalions, two squadrons, and ten guns.

The left, under Duke Nicholas of Leuchtenberg, moved along the left bank of the Tundja, and consisted of the troop of the Guards, the Dragoon Brigade, the Kiev Hussar regiment, and two sotnias of the Don Cossack regiment, a detachment of mounted Engineers, and the 16th Horse Battery, or fourteen and a half squadrons, and six guns.

Two squadrons of the 21st Don Cossacks were told off to keep up the communications between the two columns. A long halt was to be made on reaching the line Uflani—Kishla. The whole of the baggage was to follow the right column in charge of a special officer. Gurko in person accompanied the same column. A rear-guard was left at Khainkoi under General Stolietov, consisting of two brigades of the Bulgarian contingent, two mountain batteries, the 26th Don Cossack regiment, and a squadron of the Ural regiment. This rear-guard was to follow the remainder of the force on the evening of the 5th or the morning of the 6th.

Meantime the Turks were engaged as follows. The commander of the force encamped at the village of Shipka, Khulussi Pasha, in consequence of a

despatch from Réüf, the Commander-in-Chief, sent two battalions forward on the 3rd, which, effecting a junction with those that had fallen back from Esekye on the 2nd, were to form his advance guard in the direction of Khainkoi. These battalions, under Reshid Bey, took post that evening at Uflani, and during the night entrenched themselves after a fashion. Réüf at the same time advanced from Slivno to Khainkoi, but could not effect a junction with his subordinate, and the two Pashas were beaten in detail.

The right column left its bivouac at 6 a.m. The 13th Rifle Battalion, with two H.A. guns and one and a half squadrons, led the way, followed by the 15th, 16th, and 14th battalions, and these in their turn by the remainder of the column.

The left column sent forward an advanced guard under Prince Eugene of Leuchtenberg, composed of the troop of Guards, two squadrons of the 21st Cossacks, a wing of the Astrakhan regiment, and two H.A. guns. It had orders, in addition to its ordinary duties, to see to the securing of the left of our advance, and to clear the villages and woods along the bank of the Tundja of the bands of Bashi-Bazouks and armed villagers, while the right column

was to give it the support of its cavalry where necessary.

About 10 a.m. the squadron of Cossacks which led the right column encountered a heavy rifle fire from the gardens of the village of Uflani. The Turks had five battalions there under Reshid Bey, posted between the village and the Balkans. Gurko determined to attack them with his whole force, his infantry advancing in front, while his cavalry turned the right flank. Accordingly the 13th battalion was formed in column of companies, the two leading companies sending forward half their strength as skirmishers; the guns came into action and opened on the enemy's columns, and the line of skirmishers, on coming within 600 to 800 yards of the enemy, halted and opened fire in its turn. The enemy's position was a series of elevations well suited for defence, and having good cover the Turks could rain bullets on those advancing against them from a great distance. In view of the extent of this position, Tsvietsinski ordered the 15th battalion to advance into the fighting line and take ground to the right of the artillery; the 14th and 16th battalions with two of the Bulgarian contingent formed a general reserve, drawn up

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in column on the road out of sight of the enemy.

Having searched out the enemy with artillery and musketry fire, the fighting line advanced to the assault. The day was very hot, and the troops were suffering much from thirst, but they came across some mountain streams, where they halted and refreshed themselves, and then continued their advance. When they reached charging distance, the signal was given, and a loud hurrah rang out along the line. The Turks did not stand their ground, but retreated to a new position. This too presented serious obstacles, such as ditches, stone walls, and hedges, and its right flank rested on the Balkans. In order to prevent the Turks from gaining the mountains, Tsvietsinski ordered the 16th battalion to ascend the slope and harass the enemy's flank. The ground was very broken and hampered the movements of the battalion greatly, but on the goal being reached, the left flank of the enemy was subjected to a galling fire, and suffered severely. About noon the 13th and 15th battalions advanced to the assault, covered by the fire of the 10th and 15th Cossack batteries. They advanced with great dash, and after an obstinate and desperate hand-to-hand struggle,

the enemy was driven out at the point of the bayonet, pursued by their fire, while from the right the Dragoons and Kiev Hussars, got into his rear. A particularly stubborn resistance was offered by a knot of Turks who rallied round the flag. Surrounded as these were by overwhelming numbers, they refused to surrender, and fell to a man in defence of the colour, which was captured by a rifleman of the 15th battalion, named Lukyanets.

This affair at Uflani lasted some four hours. The field was literally strewn with Turkish corpses, all of them wearing fresh uniforms which looked as if they had been served out for the occasion. Coats, fezzes, leggings, pouches, and rifles were all in splendid condition. A mere handful succeeded in escaping to Kazanlik, the greater number of fugitives being driven into the mountains, whence they made their way by by-paths to the Shipka Pass. A few, who hid on the field, fled into the valley of the Maritsa and beyond the Karadja Dag. We captured many prisoners, among them the Kaimakam of Kazanlik, who informed us that five battalions of Anatolian troops had taken part in the engagement under Khulussi Pasha, that there were four more at Kazanlik, which had come up from Shipka, and that

within a day or two 10,000 men were expected from Constantinople. The enemy's loss was great, some 400 dead being found on the field, besides wounded. Our loss was four rank and file killed and seventy wounded, and two officers severely wounded. A quantity of breechloaders, chiefly Peabody-Martini's, were taken by the Bulgarians, most of which were destroyed. After riding over the field, and seeing how serious was the defeat inflicted on the Turks by the number of bodies that lay on it, General Gurko sent orders to the four battalions of the Bulgarian contingent left at Khainkoi to at once follow him to Kazanlik and join the main body. The reason of this step was his conviction that the Turks, on learning of such a severe defeat, would be so dispirited that they would not venture on an advance into the valley of the Tundja from the direction of Yeni Zagra. The moral effect of the defeat would, he reckoned, be the surest guarantee for our line of retreat being left unassailed, and obviate the necessity of spreading his force to no purpose over the valley of the Tundja.

While this affair was in progress at Uflani, the left column also was slightly engaged. From the village of New Makhala to the town of Sofular the advanced troops were constantly obliged to dismount

and drive the enemy's sharpshooters from villages, gardens, and copses. Thus just at the time when the other column was engaged, in passing a wood the force was greeted with a hail of bullets, in spite of the scouts thrown out. The first squadron of the Astrakhan regiment dismounted, threw out skirmishers, and advanced towards the wood. At 200 paces it halted, the enemy being invisible, though a hail of bullets issued from the wood. On penetrating into it it proved that Bashi-Bazouks had mounted the trees and from thence kept up a fire on our men. Then began the process of hunting them out, some being fetched down by bullets, others with the bayonet.

On reaching a point on a line with a wood to the east of Uflani, heavy firing could be heard going on between the right column and the enemy, and two squadrons of the Astrakhan regiment and a section of artillery were at once sent to attack the enemy from the right, while the remainder of the cavalry, forming line, moved forward at a trot, making a still wider détour round the village, so as to cut off the enemy's retreat towards Kazanlik. After a hot exchange of fire with the Astrakhan Dragoons and the wing of the 21st Cossacks, told off to keep up

communications between the two columns, and which had been attracted by the sound of the firing, the Turks, pressed in front by the right column, and taken in rear by the fire of the Horse Artillery, threw themselves into the mountains, keenly pursued by the dismounted Dragoons, the Cossacks, and the fire of our artillery. At the same time two squadrons were detached from the left column to pursue the mounted Bashi-Bazouks who had appeared on the right bank of the Tundja. Thus the advance guard of this column had only two and a half squadrons left, which occupied Sofular, and cut the telegraph line from Kazanlik to Yeni Zagra.

OCCUPATION OF MAGLISH.

Having occupied Uflani, the troops of the right column halted there for some hours and then advanced to Maglish, the cavalry also moving on that place by a rapid march.

In this advance the 14th battalion and the Cossack infantry moved in fighting order, preceded by their skirmishers. These for a time exchanged shots with isolated sharpshooters of the force that had just been routed. But what caused our men really serious loss was the flanking fire from the mountains. In

order to secure his flank and rear from molestation, Gurko gave orders to drive off these Turks. Accordingly one company of Cossacks was sent into the ravine, and the 1st and 2nd companies of the Rifles up the hill. The ascent was difficult, the men having to help themselves up by the boulders and roots of trees. At the same time a few shells were thrown among the enemy on the hills. In spite of these measures, the enfilading fire greatly delayed the movement of the right column, so much so that it did not reach the bivouack at Maglish till ten o'clock in the evening.

Meanwhile the left column also was continuing its advance on Maglish, after the affair at Uflani. The cavalry moved in three columns. What had been the advance guard, diminished by a squadron of the Astrakhan regiment, and a wing of the 21st Cossacks, but augmented by a squadron of the Kazans and half a squadron of the Kiev Hussars, formed the left column. It continued the work of driving the Turks out of the hamlets along the Tundja, sending the troop of Guards across the stream to cut the telegraph and attack a convoy which had been seen in the distance. The centre column was composed of the troops which had formed the main body of

the left column, and marched by the fields between the Tundja and the hills, while the right column consisted of four squadrons of the 21st Cossacks and the 10th Don Battery, detached from the column of General Tsvietsinski. The cavalry was unsupported, as after the combat at Uflani the Rifle Brigade had halted at that village. Although the object of its advance was to pursue the enemy, it was soon seen that his five battalions had been driven into the mountains, and it was only there that detached parties showed themselves, opening fire from time to time on our men. Not heeding this flanking fire, the cavalry continued its advance to Maglish, merely sending a few shells into the hills on the way. About seven o'clock in the evening it reached the bivouack at Maglish. Wearied and famished, the men, as soon as they were dismissed, threw themselves down and slept, without attempting to cook their food. So great was their exhaustion that no one took advantage of the wine which the Bulgarians brought out of the village, and it remained untasted. All slept a death-like sleep, except the mounted pickets. To guard the camp a squadron of Cossacks had been sent to the village of Ufladarkoi, another posted at Sofular, while a third was ordered to ascend the hills

to the north of Maglish, so as to cut off the fugitives who were making their way through the hills, and lastly a squadron of Hussars was posted to guard the rear of the camp.

Thus late in the evening of the 4th the whole of General Gurko's force was assembled at Maglish, and passed the night there, the troops being so disposed as to be ready to beat off an attack of the enemy, in any quarter. They were still some seven miles from Kazanlik, and the men were exhausted by a march of more than thirteen miles, performed under a burning sun, and three or four hours' hot fighting. Besides it was necessary to succour the wounded, and pick up the knapsacks, furs, and cloaks flung aside by the men in the heat of the action. The force was still twenty miles from the Shipka Pass, and haste was necessary in order to open up communications with the Gabrovo force.

ADVANCE TO KAZANLIK.

At 5 a.m. on the 5th July, the force broke ground from Maglish and advanced on Kazanlik in three columns. The right column consisted of the 16th Rifle Battalion, two companies of Cossacks, and one squadron of mounted Cossacks,

and was to march by the mountains and attack Kazanlik from the north-east. The centre column, under General Tsvietsinski, consisted of the three remaining Rifle battalions, two Bulgarian battalions, and ten H.A. guns, and was to move along the foot of the hills and attack the town on the east.

The left column included the troop of Guards, the Dragoon Brigade, the Kiev regiment, five squadrons of Cossacks, and the 16th H.A. Battery. It was to advance along the left bank of the Tundja, and endeavour to get at the enemy's rear from the south. General Gurko accompanied the centre column.

The enemy awaited our troops at the village of Ufladarkoi, some five miles to the east of Kazanlik. Two battalions of Anatolian Nizams, a portion of the Anatolian Redifs, and three guns were posted there. In addition a column of infantry was advancing from Shipka. Scarcely had the centre column left Maglish when a Cossack patrol brought news that a force of the enemy was in position not far off. Thereupon General Gurko ordered Colonel Bejanov of the 14th Rifles to continue his advance with his own battalion and four guns of the 10th battery along the plain between the foot of the

Balkans and the Tundja until he found himself under artillery fire, whereupon he was to halt and open on the enemy with his guns. He was not to resume his advance until the enemy's position had been well searched out, and the right column was ready to fall on the Turkish flank. The ground over which the centre column was advancing was level and open. Expecting every minute to have the guns open on them, the 14th battalion of Rifles drew up in fighting order, four guns being posted between the 3rd and 4th companies, which were in the firing line. The 13th and 15th battalions, two Bulgarian battalions, and the remaining guns were formed up in support. Soon the first cannon-shot rang out, and, to some extent, showed the enemy's position. It lay some five miles to the east of Kazanlik, its left resting on the Balkans, and its right on a wood. The artillery of our centre column replied to the enemy's fire, and was soon joined by that of the left. The Turks soon got the range of our guns, which, in consequence, kept changing their ground, moving forward or backward or to the sides, and thus suffered no loss, though the Turkish shells fell among our lines. Meanwhile General Tsvietsinski determined to strengthen the fighting line of the 14th battalion

with the two reserve companies, and proceeded with them and two H.A. guns to the right of the front. In so doing he also intended to overlap the enemy's position, and, if possible, open fire on the town. The 3rd and 4th companies at the same time continued their advance. While the cannonade was kept up by the centre column, the right began to turn the enemy's position, and the left also moved round his right flank.

As soon as this column had left its camp at Maglish, about five in the morning, firing from the direction of the mountains was heard. Hereupon the commander gave orders to form in order of battle: the troop of Guards and three squadrons of the Kiev Hussars formed the first line, the Kazan Dragoons and 6th Battery formed to their left, somewhat behind them, while the Astrakhan regiment, in column of squadrons, formed the reserve; the Cossacks moved in open order, covering the space between the Tundja and the hills. Thus disposed, the column moved forward to turn the enemy's right. Soon the scouts on the flanks brought intelligence that several squadrons of Bashi-Bazouks were on the right in the gardens and hamlets on the bank of the Tundja, so first a squadron of Hussars, and then two of

Dragoons were sent to clear the ground of these bodies. In addition, a squadron of the Kazan regiment and three guns of the 16th Battery were sent to co-operate with Tsvietsinski's column on the flank of the enemy's artillery. The remainder of the cavalry moved at a trot towards the village of Kargauli. The squadrons, wheeling to the left, after a series of encounters with mounted and dismounted Bashi-Bazouks, drove them beyond the Tundja, and a section of the 16th Battery and a squadron of the Kazan regiment had no sooner got within range of the enemy's artillery, than the Turks retreated, carrying off their guns to Kazanlik. Beyond the village of Kargauli our cavalry came up with them, and the Kiev Hussars and Guards, advancing in echelon of squadrons left shoulders forward, rode round Kargauli, changed front, and advanced on the Kazanlik road. But it was impossible to charge the retreating Turks, as some of them were posted in thickets and vineyards, while others took ground on the slopes. So the artillery was called up, and four guns, under Lieut.-Colonel Oreüs, opened with shrapnel on the knots of Turks that showed up on the slopes. Leaving a squadron to cover the battery, the remainder of the cavalry turned to the right, and

moved on Kazanlik. The Turks, seeing that we were turning both their flanks, began to retreat, a retreat which soon became a headlong flight. Though the enemy had thus deserted his position, we did not know what his strength might be, so the centre column was ordered to keep pace with the other troops, which led to its having to halt frequently. The men suffered as much from heat and thirst as the day before.

TAKING OF KAZANLIK.

In spite of their rapid retreat the Turks succeeded in carrying their guns into Kazanlik and again opened fire from them on our men. At first, in order to avoid bombarding the town, we endeavoured to come to terms with them, and the Kiev Hussars, by the orders of their commander, Baron Korf, were sent forward to parley, but were fired upon. Thereupon the Kazan Dragoons and Cossacks were dismounted to attack the town, while the remainder of the cavalry made a turning movement towards the south, but encountering a swamp which was difficult to pass, turned towards the town and made for the monastery; at the same time the dismounted troops advanced boldly on it

in front and rapidly forced their way through it, while the Rifles, notably a portion of the skirmishers of the 14th battalion, entered the town from the north.

The scouting parties sent out immediately after the occupation of the town along the roads to Shipka and Kalofer nowhere came in contact with the enemy. This was partly owing to the fact that, unfortunately, the cavalry column, instead of taking advantage of Kazanlik standing in the middle of an extensive plain to move round the town while their comrades were engaged, with a view to cut off the enemy's retreat to Shipka, dismounted and opened fire from their rifles, supporting the infantry in its frontal attack on the position. Consequently when the Rifles entered the town from the east, and the cavalry, remounting, entered it from the south, the Turks hastily retreated towards Shipka without much difficulty, and the force actually lost sight of them. Besides, the cavalry was delayed considerably in trying to cross the marsh and by parleying with the enemy. The trophies of the victory were 450 prisoners and three guns. Our loss was three killed and eleven wounded.

About one o'clock the two companies of the 14th Battalion, that had been sent up the hills, the 13th

and 15th Battalions, and the Bulgarian Battalion reached the town. A deputation came out to meet them, begging them to spare the inhabitants, who had taken no part in the action. General Gurko guaranteed the immunity of their property on the condition that not a single shot should be fired at the Russians in the town. Thereupon the force marched through the town with bands playing and singing songs, headed by two captured Turkish guns, and with the prisoners in the rear; a procession, headed by a cross, came out to meet them from the monastery.

OCCUPATION OF THE VILLAGE OF SHIPKA.

Having occupied Kazanlik, General Gurko determined to profit by the impression made on the Turks by the unexpected appearance of his troops in the valley of the Tundja, and at once seize the village of Shipka, and thus cut off the retreat of the Shipka garrison towards the south. But his troops, having been constantly on the move since five o'clock in the morning, and fighting nearly all the time under a burning sun, were so exhausted that a further advance was out of the question, at any rate for the infantry, and rest was imperative. Though the

cavalry was scarcely less exhausted, yet Gurko determined to move with it to Shipka with a view to coming up with the Turks, and, if possible, holding them till the infantry came up. The Rifles were ordered to follow as soon as they had sufficiently rested.

After an hour's halt at Kazanlik, the cavalry resumed its march. The Dragoon brigade and the artillery went straight across country by the shortest route to the village of Shipka. The Kiev Hussars moved at a trot along the road, and two squadrons of the 21st Cossacks moved so as to turn the village from the right, and cut off the line of retreat to Kalofer. The Hussars, reaching Shipka about two o'clock, sighted the Turkish camp, which was empty, with the exception of some sentinels and non-combatants. They rushed the camp and captured a large quantity of stores, chiefly biscuit, cartridges, and ammunition. They also captured the telegraph station, with a quantity of tapes and telegrams. On examining the inhabitants it appeared that at the pass there was a force of some 5000 Turks with artillery. On the 5th the inhabitants had heard sounds as of artillery firing, which led them to suppose that an engagement was in progress at

Shipka. When the staff reached the village, they also heard sounds of firing from the other side of the Pass.

At three p.m. the Astrakhan regiment occupied the northern part of the village, and captured a convoy of eighty waggons of biscuit. The infantry did not come up till dusk, so great was the exhaustion of the men. Consequently General Gurko could not attack Shipka that day. This he had apparently foreseen, as he had reported that he would attack Kazanlik on the 5th, which place was seven miles from the village, and still further from the Pass of Shipka. It was known that an attack was to be made from the Gabrovo side, but not exactly at what time it was to take place. The shots heard were not sufficient guarantee that the attack was actually in progress.

General Gurko ordered the 16th Horse Battery to fire a few signal shots to let the Gabrovo force know that he had reached Shipka. The position of his own force was an awkward one that night. Cut off from the main army by the Balkans, without a proper line of communications, it could not reckon either on speedy succour, or on receiving supplies of ammunition in good time. Moreover, it must be added that

the staff had no information as to what was happening on the north of the Balkans. As for the victualling of the force, its numbers were so limited that it might reckon on finding sufficient supplies in the country through which it passed, especially as the population received our troops with enthusiasm and gladly gave them all they had.

That evening the troops were disposed as follows: In the village of Shipka, the cavalry, numbering fourteen squadrons, and six H.A. guns, and five and a half infantry battalions. At Kazanlik one Bulgarian battalion, ten guns of the 10th and 15th Don batteries, the troop of the Guards, and four squadrons of Cossacks.

OPERATIONS OF THE GABROVO FORCE.

While the operations above described were in progress to the south of the Balkans, the Gabrovo force had also assumed the offensive, timing its movements with a view to attacking the Pass from the north on the 5th July.

On the 3rd Major-General Derojinski, with a force consisting of the 36th Orlov infantry regiment, a battery of the 9th artillery brigade, and four squadrons of the 30th Don Cossacks, reached Gabrovo,

where he picked up another sotnia of the same regiment and two guns of the 10th Cossack battery, and at once sent the 6th sotnia to reinforce Selvi, where Captain Antonov, with the 3rd squadron and a section of the Vladikavkaz regiment had been holding his own since the day before against some 1000 Circassians. The squadron under Captain Afanasiev reached Selvi the next morning, and, in co-operation with Antonov, drove off the Circassians and secured for us the possession of the village.

Of the remaining squadrons of Cossacks the 2nd, under Captain Galdin, had been sent on the 3rd into the mountains, had advanced to the Pass of Berdek, driven out a company of Turkish infantry, seized the Pass, and was beginning to descend into the plain when it encountered an infantry force of the strength of about a battalion, and was forced to retreat to the other side of the Pass, halting at a distance of about half a mile and applying for reinforcements. On the morning of the 4th the 1st and 2nd companies of the Orlov regiment, under Major Boino-Rodzevich, were sent to the assistance of the squadron. At seven in the evening of the 4th this detachment effected a junction with the Cossacks, but owing to the extreme exhaustion of the men,

the attack was postponed till three the next morning. By the time the infantry came up the Turks had entrenched themselves in the Pass.

The position of the Turks at the Shipka Pass, pointing towards the north, had the following advantages. The direct line of communication along the *chaussée* was fenced with entrenchments and earthworks disposed in several lines. This part of the position formed a narrow chain stretching from north to south. To the east and west of this chain rose commanding heights, on the west Bare Cap, 4875 feet high and dominating all around it, and on the east the peaks of Sosok, Sugar Loaf, and Little Berdek. Up to the 2nd July the Turkish force which occupied the position, together with the village of Shipka and the town of Kazanlik, consisted of eleven battalions and one battery under Khulussi Pasha. This force took no precautionary measures, and it was not till the evening of the 2nd that news reached it in a telegram from Reüf Pasha of the passage of the Balkans by our advanced guard at Khainkoi. Hereupon Khulussi, sending a portion of his force eastward, took post at the Pass with six and a half battalions. As the remainder were defeated and suffered heavy loss in the affairs

at Uflani and Kazanlik, we may fairly suppose that but an insignificant portion of them had returned to the Pass on the 5th July.

The dispositions made by the chief of the 9th infantry division, Prince Sviatopolk Mirski, who had assumed command of the Gabrovo force, for the attack on the Turkish position on the 5th July, were as follows :—

The right column—four companies of the 3rd battalion Orlov regiment and four guns, under Lieut.-Colonel Khomenko—was to advance by Zeleno Drevo to Imetli, leaving one company and the guns at the former to cannonade the Turkish position at Shipka.

The centre column—four companies of the Orlov regiment—was to advance towards the Pass and occupy the attention of the Turks. In consequence of the badness of the roads no artillery was attached to this column. It was accompanied by Adjutant-General Prince Mirski, Major-General Derojenski, and the Grand Duke Nicholas the younger, as staff officer.

The left companies, the 5th and 8th companies of the Orlov regiment under Captain Klientov, were to ascend the forest road to the east of the centre column, and debouch on the Pass of Shipka.

To reinforce the column of Major Rodzevich there were sent, at 7 a.m. on the 5th, the 1st Rifle company of the Orlovs, two guns and two squadrons of the 30th Don regiment. The commander of this regiment, Colonel Orlov, was placed in charge of the two detachments.

Two companies, the 3rd and 4th, were left with the baggage.

Major Rodzevich's column began its attack at 3 a.m., i.e. long before the arrival of the reinforcements sent to him. It took place in the following order: half the second company with twenty-five dismounted Cossacks, and some dozens of armed Bulgarians under Lieutenant Baliadni were to come up by the road to Yanina, and attack in the rear; the 1st company, the other half of the 2nd, seventy-five dismounted Cossacks and thirty armed Bulgarians, under the Major himself, were to attack in front.

Mount Berdek was a sharp-pointed, totally bare summit consisting of two peaks, joined by a narrow saddle. The steep slopes were covered with thick wood, which ceased some 600 feet from the summit. There was a redoubt on each of the peaks and the saddle, joined by curtains of stones. The profile of

these works was insignificant. Overcoming the difficulties of the ground with much labour, the column made its way as silently as possible to the Turkish position, but the Turks caught sight of them and opened a heavy rifle fire. Our men halted, the officers tried to push on, but in spite of their cheers, the men would not follow them. Individual marksmen fired independently from the wood, thus drawing down on them a still heavier fire. Some of our men, who were still to the rear and struggling up the slope, also fired and hit their own comrades. A terrible confusion resulted: the wild cheers, the crackle of musketry, the terror of those exposed to two fires. The officers flung themselves among the soldiers, shouting "Don't fire! Don't fire!" At last their shouts and remonstrances reduced the men to order. Having calmed them, they once more led them to the attack, and captured the right and the centre redoubts, then the left, the detachment under Lieutenant Baliasni coming up in time to take part in the assault of the latter.

Thus by five in the morning, two companies and a squadron of Cossacks had taken the entrenchments in which the Turks had two battalions or so. The enemy, who left on the ground 100 killed, retreated

to the neighbouring height, and in the evening struck his camp and retreated to Mount St. Nicholas. Our loss was ten killed, and 38 rank and file wounded. Colonel Orlov, who had been sent with reinforcements, was not in time to take part in the action, and the guns were left behind, as there was no possibility of getting them up the hill.

The right column, under Colonel Khomenko, reached Zeleno Drevo about twelve o'clock, and leaving its guns and a company there in position, moved forward, and took ground a little to the west of Bare Cap. The guns opened fire, but the enemy were out of range, so after a few shots they ceased. The column held its ground till evening and then returned.

The centre column reached at 9 a.m. the junction of the chaussée with the road by which the right column was advancing. Here it halted till noon. At ten a report came in from Major Rodzevich that he had taken the works on Mount Berdek, and wanted reinforcements. Accordingly the 4th company, one of those which had formed the baggage guard, was sent to join him. At noon the column resumed its advance, the 2nd Rifle company leading, followed by the 6th and 7th, with the 12th in the rear.

The ascent of the hill was exceedingly tiring. The leading company, with which was the chief of the staff, Colonel Ellers, reached the first outpost at 2 p.m. It was preceded by Colonel Stenkos with a Cossack patrol. At 2.20 this officer reported to Colonel Ellers that the enemy was advancing to meet them. Colonel Ellers at once posted the 2nd company on the height, and the other two on the slopes.

About 3 p.m. Prince Mirski and his suite arrived at the position to reconnoitre. At that moment a volley rang out : it was the Turks opening fire from the two lines of trenches, the blockhouse and a redoubt. This was followed by a second volley, not so well timed, and then came independent firing all along the line.

The 2nd company at once replied, and the two others were also soon engaged. The 12th, which was in reserve, was also ordered to move nearer up.

About the same time sounds of artillery firing were heard by the centre column from the rear of the Turkish position ; it was thought at first that this was Gurko's force attacking, but it proved to be only Klientov's column. The firing continued till seven o'clock, both sides keeping their positions.

The left column had been taken by its guide not along the forest road, but by another, by which it emerged at two o'clock at about rifle shot from the two Turkish camps near the Shipka Pass. It was only the rapidity with which the 8th company deployed as skirmishers and opened fire that enabled the remaining troops to make their way unharassed along the single path and form up in battle order. The combat lasted from two to six. Up till four o'clock, Captain Klientov held out, but then, finding himself quite outnumbered, and being wounded in three places, he began to draw off his men.

During the next two hours the column retired fighting, followed from three sides by the enemy, twelve companies in number, and the fire of their six guns. The only officer unwounded was Lieutenant Orlov, of the 8th company, who covered the retreat with a section, from time to time driving off the enemy with the bayonet. He was throughout assisted by Sub-Lieutenant Fialkovski, notwithstanding his wound. At 6 p.m. the enemy gave pursuit.

But in spite of the partial successes of certain columns, the troops had to be drawn off during the



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night of the 5th, the retreat of Klientov's detachment having left open to the enemy the forest road, which debouched in the rear of the force, and besides all reserves were already exhausted.

Our losses in this affair were two officers killed and four wounded, 77 rank and file killed and 122 wounded. The causes of the failure were insufficient acquaintance with the ground, in spite of abundant time for reconnoitring on the 3rd and 4th, the dispersion of our forces in the attack and the absence of communication with the force under Gurko. The latter at this time had no news of what was happening to the north of the Balkans. It was known that an attack was to be made from Gabrovo, but the time at which it was to take place was quite uncertain. Moreover, Gurko could not contemplate more than effecting a diversion, any serious attack being out of the question in view of the strength of the Turkish position. The Gabrovo force, on the other hand, reckoned on General Gurko's force striking the chief blow, and merely designed to make a demonstration, the real attack being made from the south.

ATTACK ON THE SHIPKA PASS FROM THE SOUTH ON
THE 6TH JULY.

On the morning of the 6th July, General Gurko, counting on the demoralization of the enemy and wishing to hasten on the clearing of the Pass, sent to Khulussi Pacha a letter suggesting a capitulation, but received no answer. Thereupon he sent forward to the attack the 13th and 15th Rifle battalions, and the two companies of Cossacks, all under Colonel Khinautovich ; no artillery could accompany them, as the mountain guns had been left with the Bulgarian Contingent, and the horse artillery guns could not move along the steep and rough forest track. According to General Naglovski, it was not proposed to attack the Pass that day, but merely to create a diversion in favour of the real assailants, who were supposed to be going to attack on the 6th. This was the reason for the employment of so small a force as two and a half battalions. General Gurko had at this time five and a half battalions at Shipka and one at Kazanlik, besides cavalry and artillery. Moreover, General Stolietov was expected from Khainkoi with four battalions. The Rifles were to attack from the south-east, and the Cossack infantry

to make a feint against Mount St. Nicholas, marching straight along the *chaussée* from the south. Gurko informed General Derojinski of his presence before Shipka and the attack on the Pass by a note, sent by a Bulgarian. It was delivered by him, but so late that it was impossible for the Gabrovo force to co-operate in the attack.

As at the same time intelligence was received that 1500 Turks were descending from the Travna Pass to the plains, Colonel Korevo was sent to the villages of Yanina and Gaskoi with the Kazan regiment and the 16th Horse battery, for the purpose of taking the enemy in flank on the way down, but it turned out that the Turks passed these villages only in small bodies.

Hereupon Gurko sent orders to Stolietov to join him at Shipka.

The Turkish position, which it was proposed to attack, was as follows : The Shipka Pass is a gap in the mountains which runs at right angles to the general lie of the Balkan chain. This gap is marked by five small plateaus, the most southerly of which is Mount St. Nicholas, 4300 feet in height. A *chaussée* crosses the Pass, which on passing Mount St. Nicholas descends abruptly into the southern plain some two

and a half miles from the village of Shipka. From the west parallel with the gap stretches the chain of Kapriva with the Gora Lysaia (Bare Cap) which dominates the whole country round, and for the east runs the parallel chain of Bozludja with the peaks of Sosok, Sugar Loaf, and Little Berdek. This last chain is joined to Mount St. Nicholas by a ridge called Nizki Prediel (the Low Divide). The gap through which the high road passes is rocky and quite devoid of wood, but the neighbouring heights are all covered thickly with trees and only their summits are bare.

The Rifle battalions broke ground at eight in the morning, guided by Bulgarians, who knew the mountains well and undertook to guide the troops by a side track to the enemy's flank. The ascent was exceedingly toilsome. The track was one along which cattle were driven in peace time. The troops advanced in a long file, one by one, which was the only means of progression possible, for in places they had to pass almost precipitous rocky slopes. The extreme heat and the climbing produced great thirst, and there was but little water, only what the men had taken with them in their water-bottles. Consequently the climb lasted four hours. At last the Rifles emerged on a lofty height, from which could be seen the

Turkish entrenchments and camps ; from this point it was about two versts to Mount St. Nicholas. Much to their astonishment, knowing nothing as they did of the Gabrovo force having been engaged, they found there cartridges and cartridge cases of our pattern, and caps bearing the number of the Orlov regiment. Evidently our men had been there, but the Turks still held their positions, so things must have gone badly with our comrades. Such were the thoughts in their minds as they came into action.

To give the men time to come up, the head of the column was halted, while Colonel Khinautovich sent out patrols to reconnoitre the enemy's position. These reported that the Turks had four camps on three heights, and held entrenchments contiguous to them. The Rifles formed front towards Mount St. Nicholas ; directly opposite them, at a distance of about 500 yards, was a height on which was an unfinished earth-work with a facing of stone.

When the battalions had formed up, the Colonel gave orders to attack this work. The 13th was to attack it in front, and the 15th in flank. When it was taken, the intention was to attack a low-lying camp on the ridge uniting the eastern heights

with St. Nicholas. There the Rifles were to effect a junction with the Cossacks, who were advancing by the main road. The 1st and 2nd companies of the 13th and the 4th of the 15th were thrown out as skirmishers. The attack was made over wooded ground, sloping downwards and then upwards.

As soon as our troops appeared on the flank of the enemy's position, signals were made in all the camps, and the alarm sounded. As the Rifles began to descend from the heights, the Turks opened a fusillade from their trenches, but our men continued to advance, till their skirmishers reached the foot of the hill. Then a white flag was displayed from the hill, whereupon orders were given to halt, and within a few minutes Turkish officers came down to parley. On our side they were met by Major Selianko of the 13th Rifles, a volunteer named Tikhonov, and a Tartar rifleman, who acted as an interpreter, being accompanied also by the German military attaché, Major Lignitz. The Turkish *parlementaires* announced that their commander, seeing himself surrounded, was ready to lay down his arms, but must insist on certain conditions. They then withdrew for further instructions. However, skirmishers were thrown out from the entrench-

ments, and the Turks opened a heavy fire, so Colonel Khinautovich gave orders for the advance to be resumed, and the entrenchments were captured by the Rifles. Then the 4th company of the 15th Rifles, under its brave commander, Captain Shepeliev, supported by the 3rd company, rapidly descended to the plateau and attacked the camp ; the Turks fled and were pursued by our men. But near the Steel Battery fresh troops encountered them and poured in a very heavy fire ; here Shepeliev was mortally wounded, and the Colonel, who had already been hit, received a second bullet in the skirmish line of his battalion.

The commander of the 15th, Lieut.-Colonel Beklemishev, now took command of the force, and Major Selianko of the 13th battalion. Meanwhile the advance continued, the Rifles reached the chaussée, and were only some 300 yards from the Turkish lines on Mount St. Nicholas. There the Turks concentrated all their strength ; the fire of musketry and cannon was murderous, and the skirmish line was too extended and shallow to push home the attack ; there were no reserves or artillery, no chance of effecting a junction with the Cossack infantry, who had fallen back, and the Turks were advancing to turn our right

flank. Under these circumstances the Rifles began to retire from the right, the point furthest removed from the descent into the plain. They retired firing, the officers collecting knots of men to fire volleys. On the whole the retreat was quite orderly, the Turks only sending shells after us, and not moving out of their works in pursuit. The encounter came to an end at about half-past six. Our losses amounted to more than 150 killed and wounded, 139 belonging to the Rifles.

Among the killed were Colonel Khinautovich, Captain Shepeliev, and Captain Bashtarmyi; and Sub-Lieutenant Chekanov of the 15th Rifles was wounded. On the 6th Colonel Count Roniker, of the Mounted Engineers, was killed. He had followed with the Ural troop from Kazanlik to try and catch up the Rifle Brigade, but had lost his way and turned back to try and find the right road, and was killed by ambushed Turks. Orders were at once given to scour the country, and clear out the marauders. Two hundred prisoners were taken in the process, among them being negroes and Egyptians, Arabs, dark men of pure European type who were obviously Hungarians, and others with fair hair and understanding Russian, and who were clearly Poles.

The dusk was falling when the men of the 13th and 15th Rifles reached the plain, the wounded having preceded them. This first failure had a great effect on the spirits of the troops; the bad news and the discouragement they produced spread even amongst those who had not been engaged. Meanwhile General Gurko reached the rendezvous, and with a few kind words put heart both into the wounded and the unwounded. Speaking to those who had not been engaged, he called them his "brave fellows," and this alone worked wonders, not only raising them in their own eyes, but in those of their comrades. To the 13th and 15th Rifles, who had just come down from the hills, he spoke the following words: "I thank you, my brave lads. Do not let this failure dishearten you. It is all owing to your comrades not having come up on the other side, for then we should have cut the Turks to pieces. But the time will come when we shall have an ample reward. Once more, I thank you, brave lads." It is needless to say what a good effect these words had on the men.

Having thus calmed them down, Gurko was none the less much alarmed at the condition of his force, which, after the failure of the 6th, was extremely

precarious, for at that time its rear was exposed towards Adrianople, while in front was a chain of mountains, difficult of access, and held by the enemy, whose force was at that time estimated at some ten battalions.

Although at this time there were no Turkish troops whatever in the valley of the Tundja, and the Yeni Zagra force, according to Colonel Naglovski, was too small to constitute a danger, yet it was only too probable that in a day or two the Turks would receive more or less large reinforcements from Constantinople by train, and assume the offensive. The only practical deduction it was possible for the General to make from the attack on the 6th was that the advanced guard need expect no support for some time, and must meanwhile shift for itself. At the same time, although Gurko was convinced that the Turkish force at Shipka, demoralized by its defeats at Uflani and Kazanlik, and surrounded in rear and flank, would not long hold its ground, the question was still undecided how long it could maintain itself on the Pass. Thus it was indispensable for him to protect his rear, but for this the means at his disposal were insufficient. Consequently, on the evening of the 6th July, he sent to headquarters a report of his

position and asked that an infantry brigade and a cavalry regiment might be sent him without delay.

"As for my present position," he said in it, "for the time my force is in no danger. But I foresee that in four or five days my position will grow decidedly worse, for the Turks, taking advantage of the railway to Constantinople, will be able to concentrate a considerable force at Yeni Zagra and assume the offensive. As long as the Shipka Pass is not cleared of them, my position will continue insecure. My force is not large. Even the coming up of the Brian regiment, though I shall be glad to have it, will not give me nearly as much as I want. I earnestly beg you to send me as soon as possible to the Khainkoi Pass another brigade of infantry with two batteries, and the Orden dragoon regiment. When I receive these, I shall consider myself quite secure. It is imperative that I should be strong enough to detach several battalions to Shipka, and at the same time to resist an attack of the Turks from Yeni Zagra. When I receive reinforcements, my cavalry will be able to act much more freely, for I shall have no fears for my line of communications."

On the 4th July the chief of the staff informed General Gurko that, in consequence of the approach

of the 11th Corps and the 13th Cavalry Division, the Commander-in-Chief had considered it feasible to send into the passes of the Balkans, to support the advanced guard, the whole of the 9th Infantry Division, the 1st Brigade of which would move to Khainkoi on the 6th. He also informed him of the taking of Nicopolis, and that the 9th Corps would move on Plevna and from thence in all probability cross the Balkans. Thus his communication seemed like an answer to Gurko's report sent off on the 6th July.

On the evening of that day, the advanced guard was disposed as follows:—At the village of Shipka lay the 4th Rifle Brigade, one Bulgarian battalion, the Kiev Hussar regiment, the Dragoon brigade, and three H.A. batteries, one of four guns only. At Kazanlik were the remaining corps, viz. five Bulgarian battalions, two companies of the Plast regiment, the Cossack brigade, the troop of the Guards, the Ural squadron, and all the mountain guns, fourteen in number. At Khainkoi one squadron of Cossacks was left. In all there were to the south of the Balkans $10\frac{1}{2}$ battalions, $25\frac{1}{2}$ squadrons, and 30 guns. Thus the whole of the advanced guard was concentrated at Shipka and Kazanlik, with the exception of one

squadron at Khainkoi, on the line of retreat. The 30th Don regiment and two guns of the 10th Cossack battery were attached to the Gabrovo force.

In the evening of the 6th July, about eight o'clock, General Gurko received through a Bulgarian messenger a despatch from the Gabrovo force, informing him that it was not proposed to attack the Shipka position that day, and that the Orlov regiment had left for Gabrovo.

In spite of the unfortunate issue of the first attack on the Pass, Gurko determined to repeat it the next day. As the northern issue from the defile was closed by the Gabrovo force, and the southern by Gurko's, the position of the Turks could hardly be considered favourable. About seven in the morning of the 7th a Turkish officer presented himself with an answer to his letter of the 6th, in which the Pasha declared his full concurrence with the proposed capitulation, and asked for the conditions. The terms were at once drawn up, and the order in which the arms were to be laid down, which was appointed to take place at noon that day, was stated. At the same time Gurko asked the *parlementaire* what was the reason of the treacherous conduct of his countrymen the day before. The reply was that the officers had been unable to

restrain their men from firing when our troops came within such close range. The officer then departed, promising to bring the Pasha's answer in two hours.

As Gurko wished to use the opportunity afforded by the truce to carry off the wounded who had been left on the field the day before, he sent to the Pass a party of hospital orderlies without arms, and some volunteers, officers and men, of the Bulgarian Contingent, with white flags and white brassards. His intention was notified to Khulussi Pasha by the *parlementaire*.

Noon came, and the *parlementaire* had not returned, nor were there any signs of movement in the Turkish camp. However, about one o'clock, a Turkish officer and forty-three rank and file were brought in, who had surrendered to our outposts. They belonged to the remains of the battalions that had defended Kazanlik, and knew nothing of the negotiations, were very hungry, and begged for food. This led Gurko to suspect that the Turks had tricked him by sending the *parlementaire*, and were only negotiating to gain time, and retire meanwhile by unknown paths, thus escaping pursuit. In order to ascertain what was going on in the Turkish camp, he sent forward a party of volunteers, and to support them

in case of treachery, got ready the 14th and the 16th battalions and the 5th Bulgarians for an immediate advance on the Pass. But about two o'clock, before the volunteers had been able to find out anything, some of the hospital corps came in and reported that all the Turkish positions in the Pass were entirely abandoned. About the same time an officer came in from the Pass with a note from General Skobelev the younger, announcing that it had been occupied without firing a shot by three companies of the Orlov regiment, and that by the evening there would be six more companies there with four guns. It appeared that the Turks had abandoned the Pass early in the morning, and had once more imposed on our credulity by pretending to treat.

This communication greatly raised the spirits of the force. Those who composed it thought, not without reason, that the flight of the Turks was the result of their operation of yesterday. This conviction becomes quite intelligible when we take into account that the appearance of the force in the valley of the Tundja and the taking of the village of Plevna cut off the Turks from their line of retreat. As a matter of fact the Turks had not only not

carried off their guns, but had been unable to retire in a body, and had made their way in small detachments by separate paths through the mountains. As it afterwards turned out, it was not entirely panic that had led Khulussi Pasha to abandon his strong position ; it was partly owing to the fact that at the time of our advance he had only provisions for three days, and as his convoy of biscuit, which would have lasted a fortnight, was captured by our cavalry on the 5th in the village of Shipka, the Turks had no provisions left. Thus, if our cavalry had missed capturing the convoy, it is probable that Khulussi's force, exceeding in numbers both the Gabrovo and the Kazanlik columns separately, would have been able to hold out till the 20th July, when Suleiman's army had already assumed the offensive.

In order as far as possible to harass the retreating Turks, Gurko ordered a flying column under Colonel Chernozubov, consisting of the Astrakhan regiment, a squadron of the Kiev Hussars, and a squadron of Cossacks, to be sent in the direction of Kalofer, to occupy the issues of the passes which debouched at the villages of Imetli and Sofelar ; but this cavalry column only succeeded in taking prisoners a few hundreds of Turks, as the rest took a course

more to the west, towards Chirpan and Philippopolis.

As his men were very exhausted Gurko kept them in their bivouacs at the villages of Shipka and Kazanlik, and went in person to the Pass with his staff and a small cavalry escort, many officers accompanying him, at their own request, in this reconnaissance.

OPERATIONS ON THE NORTH OF THE SHIPKA PASS.

On the north the Gabrovo force was thus employed. On the 6th July it stood fast, and on the 7th, at four in the morning, nine companies of the Orlov regiment were pushed forward to the Pass with four guns, under the command of Major-General Skobelev the younger, of H.I.M.'s Household. It was the first time that the troops of the force saw the General. About five a.m. the column halted at a watch-house, where the ascent commenced. They soon learnt the reason, for Skobelev came riding up to them on a grey horse. His manly beauty, the intelligence of his countenance, his quiet gestures, and his stalwart figure were in themselves sufficient to produce a very favourable impression. He rode up to the Orlov men and told them he was pleased that it had fallen to

his lot to command them, a regiment so famous for its former achievements.

Then he went round among the officers, introducing himself to each in turn, and said, "Gentlemen, I know these Asiatics. Go boldly forward and you will conquer." After this he went up to a group of artillery officers, had them presented to him, and told them that in all his campaigns he had always been on especially good terms with the artillery. All looked with curiosity and pleasure at the young General, and were at once inspired with boundless confidence in him, and with the conviction that with him to lead them there would be no more failures.

The second rifle company of the Orlov regiment was at once detached as an advance party, under Colonel Stenkov, aide-de-camp to the Commander-in-Chief, with orders to occupy the hill where the centre column had been engaged on the 5th. Before reaching it, Stenkov halted the company, and with its commander, Captain Nikiforov, and ten riflemen, ascended the hill to reconnoitre the enemy's position. No one was to be seen in the works, and on mounting higher, no shots were fired at them. Then they determined to go still higher, giving orders to the main body to follow, and, reaching the first line of

entrenchments, found it deserted. Mounting still higher, and expecting a volley every instant, they still found no one. At this point General Skobelev came up with two companies, and the three under his command continued to mount up the Pass. They passed successive lines of entrenchments, all deserted, with ramparts, epaulements, and batteries, with guns laying about, and only found traces of a recent and hurried flight. Arms, ammunition, uniforms, various *impedimenta*, cartridge pouches, shells, were all lying about in the wildest disorder. In the camp they found cattle ready to be cut up, wounded Turks, corpses, and three flags. They captured one solitary prisoner who could only say that there had been four battalions at the Pass and that the Pasha had given orders for them all to flee at dawn that day. As far as could be calculated, the *parlementaire* had been sent to General Gurko either at the same time or after these orders were given, with the obvious intention of gaining time to retreat.

Having ascended Mount St. Nicholas, General Skobelev and those who accompanied him witnessed a terrible sight. Around them on the hill-top and the slopes lay the beheaded and mutilated bodies of Riflemen and Cossacks, more than twenty severed

heads lying among a heap of Turkish corpses. It was plain that the Turks had not only mutilated the dead, but the wounded who had remained on the field.

In the camp at the main pass there was the same disorder and the same clear traces of hasty flight, as in the other camps; the three Krupp guns stood as they had during the encounter of the 6th July, with their muzzles to the south, even their breeches not having been removed. An unfinished telegram was also found.

Soon after Skobelev, with his three companies, reached the summit of Mount St. Nicholas, the Hospital Corps men sent out by General Gurko reached there too, and thus the two columns came into communication.

Meanwhile, General Gurko, accompanied by his staff, ascended the Pass from the south. Here, too, as on the northern side, could be seen traces of the barbarity of the Turks, while the same utter confusion reigned everywhere. On the terrace beside the guard-house was found the decapitated corpse of Captain Bashtavnuzi, while to the right and left of the road lay the headless corpses of the Cossack infantry and Bulgarians.

About 6 p.m. Gurko reached Mount St. Nicholas and, passing the Turkish barracks, met General Skobelev. By the barracks our surgeons were binding up the Turkish wounded, and not far off lay the mutilated bodies of our riflemen, and among them hospital orderlies with the Red Cross on their arms. These bodies presented a terrible sight; half naked and with the fingers cut off, with the knees turned outwards, and the soles with strip of skin cut off. This sight produced a deep impression on all who witnessed it, among them being the correspondents of several foreign papers.

On closer inspection it proved that the entrenchments had been recently thrown up, and were not finished. The position was strong by nature and had been further strengthened by art, well provided with artillery, and so lavishly supplied with munitions of war, that if the Turks had held it long enough, and had not lost heart so soon, its capture would have entailed heavy loss. In the way of trophies there fell into our hands eight guns, three being Krupps.

Thus the result of the march of the Advance Guard across the Balkans had been the occupation of the main chain all round the two principal passes.

We held possession of three passes in all, those of Shipka, Travna, and Khainkoi, which to the north all debouch on that important strategical point, Tirnova.

The preparations for the passage of the Balkans were very skilfully planned. As we have shown above, the utmost secrecy was observed. Demonstrations and feints were made in all directions. A whole series of raids to the east of Tirnova made Reüf Pasha, to whom the defence of the chain from Shipka to Slivno was entrusted, feel sure that the objective of the Russians was the pass leading to the latter place. The demonstrations from Gabrovo, carried out at first by the 30th Don Cossacks with two guns, and later by the Orlov regiment, turned the attention of the Turks to the Shipka Pass. Thus they were on the alert at the two extremities of their line of defence, while Gurko's intention was to break through in the centre.

After surmounting tremendous obstacles, by its passage through the Khainkoi Pass, which was considered impassable, the Advance Guard cut the Turkish line at its weakest point. It was necessary to gain two or three days more, and for this purpose reconnaissances were made to the east, to Slivno, and

Yeni Zagra. Under cover of these demonstrations, Gurko lead his force to the west, beat the Turks three times, everywhere achieving this result by attacking with his infantry in front and turning the enemy's right flank with his cavalry and horse artillery. The consequence was that not one of the Turkish columns which barred our road reached its line of retreat to the south, but was scattered and dispersed among the mountains. Advancing rapidly, Gurko's force captured Kazanlik on the 5th July, and by the 7th had occupied the Shipka Pass. All this had been accomplished in seventeen days: the force crossed the Danube on the 21st June, and by the 7th July had taken the Pass.

Thus the first object of the Advance Guard, to march to Tirnova and Selvi and seize the passes of the Balkans, had been attained.

In addition to this its operation had resulted in a considerable diminution of the forces of Reüf Pasha, his five battalions having been driven back from Tirnova to Osman Bazar, while Khulussi Pasha's eleven battalions had fled from Shipka and not rallied till they reached Philippopolis. Reüf had thus only eighteen battalions left round Slivno and Yeni Zagra.

The general orders to the Advance Guard on the 9th July spoke of the results achieved in the following terms:—"In the course of a single week from the 30th June you, by the help of God, have accomplished the difficult passage of the Balkans, and in the affairs at Khainkoi, Orezari, Uflani, and Kazanlik, and on the heights round the Shipka Pass, have defeated and scattered twenty-three Turkish battalions, and taken two flags, thirteen guns, and 800 prisoners, and opened a road through the mountains for your comrades."

In estimating the results achieved by the Advance Guard in its passage of the Balkans, Major Gartner says in his work on the subject, "The passage of the Balkans with such a numerous cavalry and artillery in the first place does great credit to the powers of endurance of the Russian soldier, the skill of the engineers, the foresight of the officers, and, even more, the energy of the generals."

We have already seen what an impression was made on the Turkish authorities by the advance of Gurko's force, and more especially by the news of the passage of the Balkans. The last occurrence produced a still greater effect on our opponents. They began to be alarmed for the safety of

Adrianople. "The capture of Adrianople would reduce the Turkish empire to the level of the Khanate of Bokhara," were the words used by the Sultan's Chancery in a despatch of the 4th July to the Commander-in-Chief and the Minister of War. In a despatch of the 9th to Suleiman Pasha we find that "the existence of the Empire hangs on a hair."

CHAPTER IV.

The halt at Kazanlik—Despatch of cavalry to the south—
Reconnaissances of the cavalry towards Kazanlik and
Karabunar—Taking of Eski Zagra—Advance of the army
of Suleiman.

ON the 8th July that part of the Advance Guard which had been at Shipka marched to Kazanlik and entered the town with bands playing, and was billeted about the town, the remainder bivouacking not far from it. The 16th Rifle battalion, one Bulgarian battalion, and four mountain guns, which had remained at the village of Shipka, also marched two days later to Kazanlik. Between the 5th and 10th July piquets were sent out to Saranli and the valley of the Tundja, and patrols to Kalofer, Eski Zagra, and Khainkoi. Thus by the 8th the whole force was assembled at Kazanlik, while the Shipka Pass was held by the troops that had come up from Gabrova.

The spot chosen for the bivouac was about one and

a half miles from the town ; it was elevated and beside it flowed a mountain torrent with a sufficiency of water, while the neighbouring luxuriant gardens afforded shade. It was by no means an uncomfortable abode. The rank and file got hot food twice a day, meat being served out to every man at the rate of more than a pound daily, and now and then rice porridge was cooked. The cooking was carried out in the men's saucepans and camp kettles, or in those of the Turks, captured in the affair of the 5th. The first few days there was no flour, and the men got the Turkish "chupatties," which they liked very much ; but before long regular bread was served out. The officers were in a position to eat in a civilized manner with chairs and tables. The Bulgarians did their best to please us. They offered us the local brandy, red wine, which is considered the best in Bulgaria, rose confectionery, and candied fruits in abundance, but what we most appreciated was the Kazanlik tobacco, considered the best in Turkey.

Now that the troops had settled down for the town, uniforms and boots were issued to them, which had been found in considerable quantities in the Turkish depôts at Kazanlik. As these were all of Turkish patterns, as were the cloaks, boots, knap-

sacks, cooking utensils, &c., there could be no question of uniformity, but the men got a change of clothing, which was much needed by many of them, as some of them were shoeless.

Major Popov, of the Bulgarian Contingent, was appointed commandant of Kazanlik, and he set to work energetically to restore order and set on foot a system of police. The battalions took it in turns every three or four days to patrol the town. Two companies formed the town guard, one was on sentry duty, while the fourth furnished field, piquet, and camp guards. The Kazanlik monastery was turned into a hospital, and the monks tended the wounded zealously.

In its advance from the Danube, the Advance Guard had been throughout cut off from everybody and left to its own resources. It had got no information from any quarter. The *Field Intelligencer* was not in circulation in the valley of the Tundja. This sheet, which had at first raised great expectations, in no case realized the hopes it aroused. News of the movements of the army had to be gathered not from it, but from stray officers. Such news was often very incredible, but nevertheless was eagerly sought after, and commented on by all ranks. It is

thus quite intelligible with what delight, nay enthusiasm, the news was received that there was a detachment of the Field Post Office Corps at Kazanlik. At last we got letters and papers, old though they were.

During the halt at Kazanlik we heard of the atrocities committed by the Turks in the Bulgarian villages. This intelligence excited a general desire among our Bulgarian auxiliaries to hasten to the help of the unfortunates. Anybody who had anything like proper arms put in an appearance at the Konak and asked permission to go to the neighbouring villages and attack the bands of Bashi-Bazouks. Knowing their inexperience, these volunteers asked for a Russian officer and a dozen men to lead them. Hereupon Duke Nikolai Maximilianovich, after listening graciously to the prayers of the volunteers, told off to lead them ten rank and file of the Astrakhan regiment, and that very day opposite his house a body of volunteers was paraded consisting of one hundred mounted men and two hundred infantry.

On the evening of the 9th July the staff of the force received news of the unsuccessful attack on Plevna on the 8th. The news did not cause a very pleasing impression in the force. Apparently the

Turks, too, attached no great importance to the news, for it was a long time in reaching Suleiman's staff, days after it had been received from Karabunar.

On the 10th July a thanksgiving service was appointed to be held in the 4th Rifle Brigade for the victories won. Just before the service came an orderly from H.I.H. the Commander-in-Chief, bearing his thanks to the force, and the promotion of General Gurko to be aide-de-camp, and of Prince Eugene to the Household of His Majesty. Scarcely was it at an end when another orderly appeared, bringing to Gurko the Order of St. George of the 3rd Class, and 120 crosses to be distributed among the force. That same day the men chose the recipients, and the crosses were given to them. Having communicated to the force the thanks of the august Commander-in-Chief, Gurko added, turning to the officers, that His Highness "sent his congratulations to them as brave men." A few days later the Brigade received the thanks of His Majesty, conveyed to them by his Adjutant Peikev, who declared that "the Rifles had justified the expectations of His Majesty."

After a few days the troops had quite recovered from their exhaustion. It remained for them to accomplish the other half of the task assigned to them,

and, pushing forward their cavalry as a screen, to rouse the Bulgarian populace to revolt, and at the same time cover the issues from the mountains until the roads had been re-made and heavy weights could be carried over them.

As early as the 1st July General Gurko had, as we know, written to the Grand Duke Commanding from his camp at Voinesht, saying that it would be a sin not to take advantage of our success, and pointing out the advisability and possibility of extending the operations of his column to Philippopolis and Hermanli in the valley of the Maritza, as soon as the 8th Corps had occupied the passes. Directly the Shipka Pass was occupied, the question was mooted among the staff of the column of making cavalry raids to a great distance, but this could not then be done, owing to the exhaustion of the horses from the constant marching and terrible heat.

On returning to Kazanlik on the 7th, Gurko at once proceeded to frame a plan for future operations, more especially with a view to covering the passes, until such time as the Commander-in-Chief should consider it feasible to cross the Balkans.

The conditions under which the force had to operate were at that time as follows:—In the valley

of the Tundja there were visible at every step unmistakable signs of the panic which had seized the Turkish inhabitants. It was known that to the south of the Karadja Dag the same was the case. Our successive victories in the valley, the disjointed operations of the Turks there, and the rapidity with which they evacuated the Shipka Pass, showed plainly enough that they had failed to organize properly the defence of the Balkans; this led to the conclusion that no better organized or skilful resistance was likely to be encountered further south. As for the Turkish troops it was evident that they were cut in two, one body endeavouring to rally to the east round Yeni Zagra, while the other had gone westward in a diametrically opposite direction.

In the valley of the Maritza, according to all accounts, there were no Turkish troops, with the exception of a small body which held the focus of the railway lines at Tirnova-Seimenli.¹ But though this was the case for the moment, it was plain enough that the Turks could at any moment concentrate a considerable force by railway. No news had as yet (July 8th) reached the staff of the transport of

¹ This is the Tirnova south of the Balkans.— Ed.

Suleiman Pasha's troops by sea from Montenegro to Dédé Agach.

Reports were being constantly received of the cruelties of all kinds that the Turks were enacting south of the Karadja Dag, burning, plundering, and massacring the Bulgarians. Deputations came in from all quarters asking for protection. Amongst others the following address was received from the Bulgarians of Eski Zagra on the 8th July: "Pray excuse our not standing on ceremony, which we cannot under the circumstances. We beseech you by the Cross and the Virgin, do not delay to send us the means necessary for the defence of our town. We already have sure proofs that if you do not come without delay, our town will be exposed to the merciless wrath of our neighbours, infuriated by the events at Kazanlik. We have no faith in the authorities here, and even if they were trustworthy and well-disposed, it would not be in their power to protect us."

As for the strength of the force, it had lately been diminished by the despatch of a Bulgarian battalion to Tirnova, to escort the wounded and the Turkish prisoners, while the 30th Cossacks, which had been left at Gabrova to demonstrate against the Pass, had been sent elsewhere, and the troop of Guards

recalled to headquarters. Nothing had yet been heard of the arrival of the 1st Brigade of the 9th Division at Khainkoi. Thus the force only comprised nine and a half battalions, twenty-five squadrons, and fourteen mountain and sixteen H.A. guns (two being attached to the 30th Cossacks). It was, however, expected that the main army would assume the offensive very shortly.

Taking all this into consideration, Gurko considered that the work of guarding the passes would be most effectually done, not by standing still, but advancing, routing the small detachments of Turks, and adding to the panic which had seized the inhabitants and must infallibly spread to the troops. As early as the evening of the 7th, Gurko, as he looked from the Pass towards Kazanlik, had expressed his conviction that the strength of his force lay not in its numbers but in its mobility, in the moral effect on the Turks of its sudden appearance south of the Balkans, and the series of blows it had dealt them. "If we stay where we are," he said, "we shall accomplish nothing, nay, we shall risk losing everything. The Turks will recover from their panic, collect their scattered forces, receive reinforcements by train, realize how weak we are, and reassuming the offensive with

greatly increased numbers, drive us from the valley of the Tundja. On the other hand, if we at once continue the offensive, we stand a chance of dealing the enemy further blows, and in any case shall be able to drive them further from the passes and so gain time. If our advance is a failure, the column, from its superiority in cavalry, can always retreat unmolested to Kazanlik, and take to *passively* defending the Pass."

Accordingly, on the morning of the 8th Gurko determined, after giving his troops rest till the 11th, to assume the offensive the day after in the valley of the Maritza. But the plan was merely adopted in a general way. No details had been worked out, as no definite information as to the Turkish movements had yet been received. It was assumed that, before the end of the three days' halt, such information would be received, and then the details would be filled in. In the meantime two objectives were kept in view, Yeni Zagra and the meeting point of the railway lines at Tirnova-Seimenli. Further intelligence would decide the question which of these was to be chosen.

Till then the aim of operations was to be (a) to rout the Turkish detachments in the valley of the Maritza; (b) to increase the prevailing panic, and

(c) to clear the valley of the Maritza of the Turks, and keep them as far as possible from the passes of the Balkans.

As for raising the Bulgarians in revolt, Gurko assumed that this could only be done in rear of the force, and not in front of it; the cavalry he did not consider sufficiently strong to cover such a proceeding. It must be added that at the time it was very difficult to count on the success of such an attempt, as the conditions were so unfavourable. It was impossible to expect from born slaves that they should turn into soldiers in a single night, and the Bulgarians, it appeared, were more calculated to take a furtive vengeance on their former oppressors than to encounter them in open fight. It must not be forgotten that at that time the Bulgarian levies had had no opportunity of showing what they could do in battle, as they afterwards did so effectually before Yeni Zagra. Accordingly General Gurko put off this part of his task till a more convenient season.

Having arrived at this conclusion, Gurko could not fail to realize that in a further advance a very hard task would fall to the lot of the cavalry, as it would have to manœuvre on a very extended front. He therefore wished that it should be augmented by

the 30th Cossacks rejoining the Force, and the addition of a brigade of the 13th Cavalry Division, thus raising it to thirty-nine squadrons. In addition, he wished for an increase in artillery, if only to the extent of a nine-pounder battery, as the infantry had no artillery except mountain guns of small calibre unsuited for a lengthy march.

So on the 8th he sent to the Commander-in-Chief the following autograph letter :—

“8th July, 1877, Kazanlik. Your Imperial Highness,—The occupation yesterday by the troops of the 8th Corps of the Shipka Pass has brought to a satisfactory conclusion the first act of the operations of the Advance Guard south of the Balkans. I am glad to think that my operations in the valley of the Tundja meet with your approval. In the affairs of the 2nd—6th July, by the assistance of the Almighty, I destroyed the Turkish forces in that valley. But in order not to do away with the moral effect on the enemy of the unexpected appearance of my column on this side of the Balkans, an effect finding its expression in the panic which has struck them and the complete incoherence of their movements, it is imperative that our advance should be

continued. But unfortunately, my troops, in consequence of their incredible exertions, and the tropical heat at the foot of the Balkans, are so exhausted that it is necessary for them to rest till the 11th inst. inclusive. Moreover, I am weak in infantry and artillery (the mountain guns are no longer of any service) and even in cavalry. I want a large force of the latter; as it is, what I have gets no rest, yet it wants it more than the infantry. The Caucasus Brigade, which was originally allotted to me, has been sent elsewhere. I therefore beg your Highness to let me have a regular brigade from the 13th Division and to send me back the 30th Cossacks. In that case I shall leave at Kazanlik part of the Bulgarians with eight mountain guns, and with the rest continue to advance towards Adrianople. It would be desirable to let me have at least one nine-pounder battery, to be attached to the Rifles, for the effect of artillery on the Turks is tremendous, but our mountain guns cannot hold their own against the field, or even the mountain guns of the Turks. The Lesser Balkans are not a sufficient obstacle to check my force. If your Highness will consent to give me the cavalry brigade which is now on its way across the Balkans to Tvarditsa, I would direct its march

by Tvarditsa on Yeni Zagra and the railway centre at Tirnova. As I do not think that we should want the line to Yambola in our further operations, I should instruct this brigade to destroy it entirely, but leave that to Talar Bazardjik complete for our use.

"I do not know if I have understood your Highness's wishes as to my further movements, but to undertake them with a reasonable chance of success two things, I repeat, are necessary—to send me speedy reinforcements of cavalry and infantry, and to despatch to me without delay biscuits, cartridges, and transport. If I lose a day here, I may miss all the advantages of my present position, which seriously threatens the Turks.

"(Signed) Lieut.-General GURKO."

From the evening of the 8th reports began to reach the staff of the transport by sea of Suleiman's army to Dédé Agach. These reports were very vague, and at first it was difficult to put any faith in them. But the next day they began to assume definite shape, although it was still not known where this army was to rendezvous, when it would begin to appear on the scene of operations, and what its

strength would be. However, it seemed clear that it was intended to operate in the valley of the Maritza. In consequence of intelligence received that great preparations were being made on the railways for the transport of this force, it was concluded at our headquarters that it would assemble at the railway bridge, between Tirnova and Seimenli, behind the Maritza.

This intelligence was certainly very alarming. It became clear that in a short time the Turkish force in the valley of the Maritza would be strongly reinforced, when it would become doubtful whether it would be possible to hold the issues of the passes. It was out of the question for our weak Advance Guard to hold its own long against the superior numbers of Suleiman. Gurko once more sought to escape from this position, not by inertly remaining where he was in an open plain, like the country round Kazanlik, but in a rapid advance on the railway centre at Tirnova, with a view to defeating the army of Suleiman in detail as it came up. But on the 9th, just after he had come to this decision, he received the subjoined letter from H.I.H. the Commander-in-Chief:—

"Tirnova, 8th July, 1877, 2 p.m.

"MY DEAR GURKO,—I can find no words to express to you my deep and heartfelt gratitude. You are a hero among heroes. You have admirably acquitted yourself of the difficult task I assigned to you, and to my complete satisfaction. Now I should wish you not to move your infantry beyond the Tundja, but to send your cavalry out in all directions, not confining it to the valley of that river. It must turn up in all quarters and harass the enemy as far as it can go and its strength will allow, but at the same time with so much caution as to ensure success ; it must cut the telegraph wires and hide the apparatus, but not pull down the posts, so that when we advance it can be used again. The same with the railway.

"The 1st Brigade of the 9th Division will occupy the Pass of Khainkoi. That of Shipka will be held by the 2nd Brigade of the 9th and the 13th Division, while I shall remain for the present at Tirnova ; I cannot advance till we see matters take a favourable turn at Rustchuk. I will let you know as to the general advance in good time. Get as much and as detailed information as you can about the enemy and report to me frequently. Convey to the gallant Rifles and the rest the thanks of the Tsar

and my own; my warm thanks to all, from the General down to the humblest soldier. I am proud to command such fellows.

"The Lord be with you all. Have you lost many men so far? I have just been told what is required for your column.

"I embrace you and thank you once more, both as Commander-in-Chief and Inspector General of Cavalry.

"I remain, your ever grateful old Commander,

"NICOLAI."

It seemed as if, on the strength of this letter, the proposed forward move against Suleiman Pasha's army would have to be abandoned. But Gurko, conjecturing that it must have been written before the receipt of the news of Suleiman's approach, and feeling sure that a more minute knowledge of the circumstances and of the proposed plan would alter the decision of the commander, did not give it up, and wishing to bring as many men as possible to bear on Suleiman, as soon as he learnt that General Boreisha's brigade had reached Khainkoi, sent to him requesting him to march towards Kazanlik and, in conjunction with himself advance on Tirnova and

Seimenli. At the same time he ordered a detailed report to be drawn up for the information of the Commander-in-Chief, and wrote seeking permission to advance.

But meanwhile instructions were received from the chief of the staff, dated 9th July (No. 769). These ran :—

“ In accordance with the report of the commander of the 9th Corps, the 5th Infantry Division, after taking Nikopolis, was ordered to Plevna, where it encountered superior numbers and was forced to retire. Three regiments retreated towards Nikopolis, and one, with the cavalry brigade, to Bulgaren all having suffered heavy losses.

“ To reinforce the 9th Corps, the Grand Duke has sent a brigade of the 30th Division, which has reached Pavlo, along the high road from Biela to Plevna, and a brigade of the 32nd Division from the neighbourhood of Tirnova by Nikup station to Gorny Studen on the high road to Plevna. The two are placed under the orders of the commander of the 11th Corps.

“ In order to secure the safety of the troops occupying Gabrova and the passes, Prince Mirski has been ordered to send a regiment and a battery

to Selvi, where are four squadrons of the Guard Cossacks and the 30th and 23rd Don regiments.

“The 14th Infantry Division is assembled round Tirnova, while the 1st Brigade of the 9th has been sent to the Khainkoi Pass, which it has probably occupied by now.

“The 11th Infantry Division and the 13th Cavalry Division are on the Osman Bazar road.

“The force of H.I.H. the Cezarévich occupies the line of the Kara-Lom, near Rustchuk.

“Until it becomes clear what result the advance of the enemy from Plevna will have, the Grand Duke thinks it necessary that your Excellency should not move your infantry beyond Kazanlik, and, in case things turn out badly, should hold yourself in readiness to occupy the pass with your infantry, and thus set free the troops belonging to the 9th division for other purposes.

“I also think it right to inform you that according to intelligence received by telegraph the Corps of Suleiman Pasha from Montenegro is being carried by sea to Enos, and thence by railway to Adrianople, where the heads of its columns will arrive on Tuesday next.

“The Grand Duke desires your Excellency to

report as soon as possible on the dispositions you propose to make under the existing circumstances."

These instructions quite changed the conditions under which the Advance Guard had to operate. In consequence of the failure at Plevna, not only was the passage of the Balkans by the army deferred indefinitely, but there was the possibility that things might get still worse at Plevna, in which case it would be imperative for the infantry of the force to hold the pass itself.¹ It was also known that Suleiman Pasha was on the march. For these reasons, and also because of his being categorically forbidden to move his infantry beyond Kazanlik, he was forced to give up the idea of advancing to meet Suleiman.

Gurko felt after receiving his instructions, that the position of his force was very awkward. To manœuvre in the long and narrow valley of the Tundja, with the precipitous wall of the Shipka Balkans behind him, and the inaccessible chain of the Karadja Dag in front, not knowing what was going on in his rear, seemed to him no light task, and although his Bulgarian messengers brought him pretty constant intelligence from the valley of the Maritsa,

¹ Col. Eparchin writes here with *ex post facto* knowledge. He could not have known at the time that Plevna would resist as long as it did. Cf. p. 172.—Ed.

he could not entirely depend on them. It was necessary for him to extend his field of vision, to see and know what was happening beyond the range. Thus the advance of the cavalry beyond the Karadja Dagħ was quite imperative. With it on the other side of the chain he could ascertain in good time the movements of the Turks, but unless it were there they might turn up unexpectedly within a short distance of his force, when he could no longer take precautionary measures. Happily this movement was not only permitted but even approved by the Commander-in-Chief's letter of the 8th.

Having so far abandoned his intended offensive, Gurko proceeded to push his cavalry beyond the Karadja Dagħ to reconnoitre and destroy the railway lines : but as for this latter purpose it was necessary to divide it, and the railway centre at Tirnova was said to be fortified as well as garrisoned by infantry, and both the points at which the lines were to be torn up were at a great distance from Eski Zagra, he could not leave that place without a sufficient garrison of infantry. Yeni Zagra was at that time held by the Turks, who might advance and seize Eski, and then the position of the cavalry engaged in breaking up the railway would become very critical.

To secure for the cavalry its only line of retreat, Gurko determined to push forward to Eski Zagra four battalions of the Bulgarian contingent, and went there in person, so as to exercise direct control over the carrying out of his plan, and also to personally reconnoitre the country round Eski Zagra. On the 10th July he sent to the Commander-in-Chief the following despatch :—

“ 10th July, evening.

“ YOUR IMPERIAL HIGHNESS,—I have just received the instructions of the Chief of the Staff, informing me that the 9th Corps had been attacked before Plevna, and that consequently the advance of the army across the Balkans had been stopped, and that Suleiman Pasha's army would be disembarked at Enos. This latter we knew already. Accordingly, being quite of one mind with him that under present circumstances the movement on Adrianople would be folly, I shall leave at Kazanlik the Rifles, the Cossack infantry, and one Bulgarian battalion, and propose to-morrow morning to make a raid on the railway lines, sending four Bulgarian battalions with the Kiev Hussars to Eski Zagra, one dragoon regiment to Karabunar, on the

Yamboli branch, and the other to Pacherli,¹ on the Tatar Bazardjik branch, to tear up these two lines. By Wednesday evening, with God's help, I hope to be back at Kazanlik. Would not your Highness think it advisable to send the brigade which is now at Khainkoi to Kazanlik, so as to avoid dribbling away our strength? The pass can always be cleared, even if the Turks should occupy it. Then, if necessary, the Orlov regiment can be taken from the top of the Shipka Pass for other purposes, and having ten battalions of infantry and the six Bulgarian battalions here, we could hold the pass against four times that number. By the morning of the day after to-morrow I shall have the honour to communicate to your Highness what intelligence I may collect at Eski Zagra. According to what I can gather here, there are no Turkish troops for a long distance round. Prisoners continue to be brought in in hundreds; I have some 500 in all now. I have still ninety-four wounded here. My losses in all the engagements on the Tundja are —, of whom 232 belong to the Rifles. There were two generals of division at Shipka, but what has become of them the prisoners do not know.

¹ Kyecherli.

It would be a very good thing if I could get a nine-pounder battery, to act with the Rifles.

“(Signed) GURKO, Aide-de-Camp to H.M.,
“Commanding the Advance Guard.”

In order not to remain inactive it was determined as soon as the troops had rested to make a series of raids and feints, which was also the best means of obtaining intelligence. On the 10th July the Kazan dragoon regiment with a section of the 16th H.A. battery and a squadron of the 26th Cossacks was sent from Kazanlik to Eski Zagra to occupy that town, in answer to the urgent representation of the inhabitants, expressed through a deputation. The troops were enthusiastically received by the inhabitants, and seized the telegraph station, and cut the wires, bivouacking near the town.

RECONNAISSANCES TO KARABUNAR AND KAYADJIK.

On the 11th July a column consisting of the Astrakhan Dragoon regiment, a squadron of the 21st Cossacks, and a section of the 16th H.A. battery, under Colonel Matsilevich, moved from Kazanlik by Eski Zagra to the railway station at Karabunar. Another column marched on the station at Kayadjik,



on the line from Tirnova to Philippopolis, and was composed of the Kazan Dragoon regiment, one squadron of the 26th, and two guns, under Colonel Korevo, having Colonel Freze as his brigade major. Both had orders to destroy the lines at these stations and collect intelligence as to the enemy's movements. The Kiev Hussar regiment, one squadron, and four Bulgarian battalions were sent on the 4th to Eski Zagra to support these two columns, with fourteen mountain guns and two Cossack guns. The Bulgarians and Hussars occupied Eski Zagra that same day and were eagerly welcomed by the inhabitants. General Gurko arrived at the town with these troops.

The remainder of the force, the Rifle Brigade, two Bulgarian battalions and two companies of Cossacks, nine squadrons and ten H.A. guns, remained at Kazanlik under General Rauch. At Eski Zagra we learnt that the only Turkish troops in the neighbourhood were at Yeni Zagra, to the number of ten battalions with cavalry and guns. On the morning of the 12th a patrol of the Hussars, sent out towards Yeni Zagra, reported that the Turks were advancing from that quarter. No news were received from the columns sent to Karabunar and Kayadjik. Mean-

while the people of the surrounding districts came into Eski Zagra in crowds, fleeing from the cruelties of the Circassians and Bashi-Bazouks, who were massacring the inhabitants. Accordingly the troops there were ordered to parade, and within an hour were in readiness, and several squadrons were sent out to reconnoitre towards Yeni Zagra, while it was determined to hold the town to the last. General Gurko himself chose a position for the troops. Happily it turned out that it was only some of the enemy's cavalry which was approaching.

That evening Colonel Matsilevich's column returned from its reconnaissance. In its advance on Karabunar it had been divided into three bodies. The left, under Baron Rosen, consisting of a composite squadron of Dragoons and Cossacks, was told off to cover the men employed in blowing up the line with dynamite, under Captain Babaev, of the Kiev Hussars. The centre consisted of a wing of Dragoons with artillery, and moved straight on the station at Karabunar by Azably, while the right comprised Major Svietsinski's squadron of the Astrakhan Dragoons and a party of sappers. These two encountered a body of Turkish infantry, about three battalions strong, and some Circassians, and were

unable to carry out their task, but the left succeeded in destroying the standpipes and tearing up several yards of rails and rendering useless still more in different parts; it burnt three sheds, and rendered the telegraph line useless for a distance of six miles, the inhabitants pulling down the posts. The information brought in by the Dragoons was to the effect that the Turks were concentrating at Tirnova-Seimenli, and that reinforcements were being sent from Adrianople to that point

On the 13th July, at noon, Colonel Korevo's column also returned to Eski Zagra. On approaching the Maritsa, near Kayadjik station, they saw on the other bank near the railway line some parties of Bashi-Bazouks. The 4th squadron of the Kazan Dragoons, under Major Teplav, was sent forward to drive them off, which it did after fording the river, and enabled the mining party to proceed to destroy the station and its appurtenances. Some small bridges and the line were rendered useless, and the station master, a German, his books, and the telegraph apparatus were carried off to Eski Zagra. At the same time a report was received from the commander of the 1st brigade of the 9th division, that he had on the 10th sent out from Khainkoi to Yeni Zagra

a reconnaissance under Colonel Skugarevski, who reported that from the heights to the north-west of the town he had seen the bivouacs of six battalions of Turkish infantry to the south and west of the town, and that troops could be seen round the railway station, the number and description of which it was difficult to determine. The Bulgarians reported that there were six guns in the town.

On the 13th July a squadron of Cossacks was sent under Captain Chilyaev to cut the telegraph line along the high road from Adrianople to Philippopolis. The attempt was not successful, as large parties of Circassians were encountered, and considerable numbers of regulars were sighted along the railway line. Hereupon Captain Chilyaev sent a Bulgarian to cut the wire, which he did, bringing it back as a trophy. Although the object of the party was not accomplished, it brought in valuable intelligence. This was that considerable movements of troops were in progress on the line from Tirnova to Karabunar and Kayadjik, that the line was being repaired throughout, that there were 4000 Turkish troops at Seimenli, and some 2000 Bashi-Bazouks at Chirpan. It was plain that the raids of our cavalry had done no material damage to the line.

On the 15th intelligence was received at the headquarters of the force that the Turks were advancing from Yeni Zagra to Khainkoi. To verify this intelligence a wing of the Kazan Dragoons was sent forward under Lieut.-Colonel Bielogrudov, with orders to push home a reconnaissance towards Yeni Zagra, and to seek actual contact with the enemy. On reaching the village of Idjikoi, three miles from Yeni Zagra, he encountered some Circassians, who threw out skirmishers, and retired, firing from horseback. Our men, with mounted skirmishers in front, advanced rapidly at a trot, but the Circassians suddenly opened out, and unmasked a battery of four guns, which opened on our men at some 600 yards, while at the same time the Turkish infantry opened fire from a wood which flanked the Dragoons. Hereupon Colonel Bielogrudov proceeded to fall back at a walk. Instantly the Circassians reappeared, as if they had sprung from the ground, and riding down on our men, opened a rapid fire from their magazine rifles. But in spite of the loss thus caused Colonel Bielogrudov continued to fall back deliberately, the Circassians getting bolder and following more closely. Some young officers lost patience and begged him to turn and charge. But he refused,

declaring, "Do not be impatient, it is early yet. We must wait till they are near enough for them to have no chance of escape." When the Circassians were quite at their heels, he quickly wheeled his two squadrons, charged, and in a moment they were sabreing the Circassians. The latter proved useless in a *melée*; their horses were small, and the Dragoons cut them down from their superior height, strewing the ground with scores of corpses. The Kazan regiment lost in this affair eleven killed and eleven wounded; only two were wounded with the "*arme blanche*," the remainder falling under the mounted fire at short range.

This reconnaissance showed that there was a force of all arms at Idyikoi. It had, however, not been ascertained how many Turks there were at Yeni Zagra, or whether the enemy was advancing on Khainkoi. Thus, in spite of his successful encounter with the enemy, Colonel Bielogrudov had not attained his object.

The reconnaissance carried out on the 16th by two squadrons of the Kiev Hussars, under Major Tulanov, passing through the villages of Arabadjikoi, Azably, Karabunar, and Gydyal, ascertained that at Karabunar station there were some seven battalions with

artillery, but nothing had been heard of an advance of the enemy from the line Kayadjik-Karabunar. That day a letter was found on the body of a Turk, which showed that forty-nine battalions of infantry and some eighty guns had reached Adrianople by train under the command of Suleiman Pasha from Montenegro. Later news was received from headquarters that the Turks were advancing from Lovcha to Selvi.

Thus it gradually came out that a strong force of the enemy was concentrating in the valley of the Maritsa, while the raids of the Circassians and Bashi-Bazouks became more daring and constant. Every day the neighbouring villagers fled in hundreds to Eski Zagra to seek the protection of our troops against the fury of the Turks. The Turkish inhabitants of the place, who had been so terror-stricken they had not dared to show themselves in the streets, suddenly began to assume an air of defiance, and to venture on acts of provocation. At last on the 13th July shots were fired at some Cossacks strolling through the Turkish quarter. Thereupon Gurko, who was still in the place, gave orders to at once punish the guilty parties, who were hanged at the doors of

the houses from which the shots had been fired.

Thus after Gurko had reached Eski Zagra, more or less definite, though as it subsequently proved not wholly reliable, information had been obtained as to the enemy's movements. For instance, we were told that Suleiman's army was assembling at Adrianople, and that to cover its concentration a separate force was collected at the junction of the railway lines, numbering eight to ten battalions, or according to some accounts 8000 men, i.e. about fourteen battalions. We learnt afterwards that the place of assembly of Suleiman's force was not Adrianople, but the railway station at Karabunar. There were the most conflicting versions of the date at which the concentration would be completed, some saying it would be soon, some quite the reverse. There was no precise information as to the numbers of his force.

In the second place the numbers of the force at Yeni Zagra by the most recent reports were six to eight battalions with twelve guns, and a considerable number of Circassians. It proved that there were fifteen battalions there with eighteen guns. Moreover all accounts tended to show that the force there

was very demoralized and dreaded our advance. Lastly, news came from Philippopolis that Khulussi Pasha's force from Shipka was rallying there, and that it, too, was in a very demoralized condition.

As the result of all the information received, the following conclusion had been come to at headquarters as to the position of the Turkish forces. At a short distance from the force lay three bodies of Turks, viz. some eight battalions at Yeni Zagra, and some ten battalions at Tirnova-Seimenli, but very much demoralized. Further off, at Adrianople, was assembling the army of Suleiman, but there was no definite news as to when it would be complete, or its numbers; it was only known that it was to begin to assemble about this time. All these conjectures, though they were not exactly true, proved to be not far removed from the truth as to the relative strength of the opposing forces.

This was the most favourable moment for taking the Turkish forces in detail. All those that were nearest would for some days be an easy prey to the Advance Guard. If it and General Boreisha's Brigade had advanced on the 12th, as Gurko proposed, he would on the 13th have had fifteen battalions and some twenty squadrons close to either

Karabunar or Gydjal, and on the morning of the 14th could have attacked the heads of Suleiman's columns at Karabunar, or in the afternoon have attacked the enemy at Tirnova-Seimenli. In either case his infantry would have been equal or superior to the enemy, while in cavalry and artillery the superiority would have been on our side. But most unfortunately our failure before Plevna had reduced the army to inactivity, and the chance of taking the enemy in detail was of necessity allowed to be let slip. Moreover Gurko could not have called in General Boreisha's brigade, for as early as the 12th the Headquarters Staff had informed him that the Commander-in-Chief considered it imperative to hold and repair the road through the Khainkoi Pass, which was the nearest route to Yeni Zagra, and consequently H.I.H. could not consent to move the brigade from Khainkoi to Kazanlik, as Gurko had suggested on the 10th. Clearly the main object of sending the brigade to Khainkoi was to cover the retreat of the Advance Guard in case of necessity.

Under these circumstances Gurko wrote as follows to the Commander-in-Chief from Eski Zagra, even before the cavalry had come in from reconnoitring :—

“It is most unfortunate that the affair at Plevna

has checked our advance, for if it had not been so, I should have taken one regiment from the brigade guarding the Khainkoi Pass, and pushed forward my whole force in the direction of Adrianople, spreading terror as I advanced, scattering the detachments which the enemy had incautiously left in my path, and falling on the heads of Suleiman's columns at Adrianople, as they came up by railway. But now the time for such a movement has been let slip, and the only thing that can now be done is to annihilate the Yeni Zagra force in co-operation with the troops at Khainkoi, if it does not take to flight after the tearing up of the railway, and then with a strong cavalry column, together with sufficient artillery, seize the junction of the railway lines and clear the whole left bank of the Maritsa of the enemy, continuing to watch it with my cavalry, for which purpose I shall post the latter south of the Lesser Balkans, for the troops guarding the Shipka Pass will have to be moved to Eski Zagra.

“The position at Kazanlik, owing to the narrowness of the valley of the Tundja, does not afford sufficient room for the reconnaissances of my cavalry, and the enemy, advancing from the front, might appear unexpectedly in the valley. It is impossible to cover

the pass from a position at its foot, and in case of disaster I might be hemmed in against the heights, and lose all my cavalry and some of my artillery. But by posting myself here, in case superior forces should advance against me, I shall always get timely notice of such a movement, thanks to the wide sphere of action opened to my cavalry. But in order to secure myself against a sudden appearance of the enemy on the right flank of the Shipka position, i.e. from the direction of Karlov, or on the left from Slivno, I shall leave in the valley of the Tundja eight squadrons of Cossacks. It is scarcely conceivable that the enemy should succeed in planning an attack both in front and flank. His ill-combined movements in the valley of the Tundja lead me to believe that he is incapable of executing such a plan, especially without the aid of the telegraph.

“Until I receive further instructions from your Highness, I shall keep my force disposed as follows:—three regiments of regular cavalry, six H.A. guns and three squadrons of Cossacks in the valley of the Maritsa; four Bulgarian battalions and four mountain guns as a support to the cavalry at Eski Zagra; and the remainder, viz. the Brigade of Rifles, the Cossack infantry, one battalion of the Bulgarian levies, nine

squadrons of Cossacks, ten H.A. and ten mountain guns at Kazanlik and Shipka. If I hear that, owing to things going ill with us as against the Widdin Corps, the Orlov regiment has left the pass, I will send the Bulgarians there, leaving only the cavalry in the valley of the Maritsa, which can always find means to retreat, not having inaccessible heights at its back."

Upon the return of the cavalry columns to Eski Zagra, Gurko himself returned to Kazanlik, leaving the command of the troops at the former to Prince Nikolai, with Colonel Freze as his Chief of the Staff. Prince Eugene was to command the cavalry there, and Lieut.-Colonel Sukhotin continued to act as Brigade Major. The troops comprised the four Bulgarian battalions, the Dragoon brigade, the Kiev Hussar regiment, three squadrons of the 21st and 26th Cossacks, the 16th Horse Artillery battery, a mountain battery of four guns, and a section of the 10th Don battery. It was in case the enemy should advance to defend Eski Zagra and the pass through the Karadja Dag.

At Kazanlik Gurko received a report from General Boreisha which contained *inter alia* the following:—
"With a view to keeping up a continued watch on

the enemy's troops near me, I sent on the 12th inst. Captain Tolokomiekov to Yeni Zagra, to the same point where Lieut.-Colonel Skugarevski made his observations as to the enemy's dispositions. He reported to me in the evening that no infantry could be seen in the place, and he could not discover where it had gone: there was only a cavalry camp on the north of the town."

At the same time his Bulgarian scouts reported that the Turks had marched out of Yeni Zagra in great force and made for the south. These reports taken together led the Staff to conclude that the Turks had entirely abandoned the town. It subsequently proved that a large body of six battalions, a battery, and numerous Circassians had really marched away to the south. But this was not an evacuation of the town, being only for the purpose of escorting Reüf Pasha to Radino, where he was to meet Suleiman. On the 16th this column returned to Yeni Zagra.

On the 13th Gurko reported to the Commander-in-Chief that in five or six days' time Suleiman's army would be dangerously near to him. He could already make out fifteen battalions in his front which had not been there before, so that there could

be no doubt that Suleiman was assuming the offensive.

It is clear from the instructions sent him on various occasions from Headquarters that he was not allowed such a free hand as he should have been. Not only were the objects he was to attain laid down for him, but the means he was to use in attaining them. For instance, he was told not to advance beyond Kazanlik, and on the 14th the Rifle Brigade was taken from him. Such interference materially hampered his independence of action.

Meanwhile the position of the force was growing more precarious every hour. The tiny cloud that had appeared on the horizon in the shape of the advanced troops of Suleiman's force grew and grew till it threatened to burst over its head, and still the force lay in enforced inactivity at Kazanlik, not venturing to send forward anything but its cavalry. How could it hope to repel the onslaught of Suleiman's army with its slender resources, and with no advantage of position, the town lying as it did in the middle of a plain? To retreat from Kazanlik, after an unsuccessful engagement, would mean a catastrophe, for it was practically out of the question to make a successful retreat on the Balkans. True, he

might retire in good time on the pass, and there offer resistance to the Turks, relying on the strength of the position. But that was not what he had been sent to do. His duty was to guard the outlet from the pass into the plains, and he was morally bound to defend the valley of the Tundja, and not merely consult his own safety. To retreat to the pass would mean to lose half of what he had attained in the first part of his operations. Besides, with such perilous times approaching it was dangerous to leave in the valley of the Tundja two forces, those at Kazanlik and the Khainkoi Pass, operating independently. It was imperative that they should be united under one head.

After thinking the matter over thoroughly, Gurko came to the conclusion that if he was to be forced to fall back on passive defence, he ought to transfer this defence from Kazanlik to Eski Zagra, which offered far greater chances of success. Accordingly, at 5 a.m. on the 15th he sent off to the Commander-in-Chief the following dispatch.

“ Eski Zagra, 15th July, 5 a.m.

“ YOUR IMPERIAL HIGHNESS,— Your aide-de-camp, Captain Bibikov, will have the honour of handing

this dispatch to you. I have instructed him to inform your Highness of all the disadvantages of my position at Kazanlik and the danger which may crop up in a few days, owing to the scattered position of the troops on this side the Balkans, in case the Turks, recovering from their alarm and reinforced by the victorious troops of Suleiman, assume the offensive, with numbers far superior to mine. In order to ensure my future safety, I have urgent need of General Boreisha's brigade and one nine-pounder battery. We are absolutely bound to prove to the Turks *notre vitabilité (sic)*, or their soldiers and the inhabitants too will recover from their panic and show their teeth. To shift my headquarters to Eski Zagra is to me a matter of life and death. Here my base is the narrow strip of the valley of the Tundja, and I cannot use my cavalry to reconnoitre in front, while at my back is the precipitous chain of the Lesser Balkans, which, in case the enemy should advance in overwhelming numbers, leaves my force no alternative but to seek a glorious death. Whereas at Eski Zagra there are three lines by which my cavalry can bring me intelligence of the enemy's advance, and in a position where my fire would command the country for a long distance, and with

my superiority in cavalry I should have every chance of getting the better of the enemy, even in spite of his great superiority in numbers. But for this purpose it is necessary to collect in one place, under one hand, the small detachments which are scattered like those of the Turks about the valley of the Tundja. But in case a disaster should befall me, and force me to seek safety by recrossing the Balkans, that would be possible by Khain Bogaz at the expense of great loss of life, but out of the question on the Shipka line.

"I shall eagerly await, your Highness, the return of Captain Bibikov, and your decision as to the fate of my force, and the country of which the defence has been entrusted to me. If I leave Eski Zagra, the Bulgarians will kill and plunder the Turks who have given up their arms, and the Circassians and Bashi-Bazouks will massacre both.

"(Signed) GURKO, General commanding
the Advance Guard."

The first fairly definite news as to the advance of Suleiman were received at the headquarters of the Advance Guard from Prince Leuchtenberg in the evening of the 15th. These were to the effect that

his army was assembling, not at Adrianople, but at the railway junction at Karabunar ; that its strength was estimated at 30,000 men, and that besides there was a force of some 6000 at Tirnova-Seimenli, also under the orders of Suleiman ; that the concentration had been going on for some days, and was being pushed forward with great rapidity. Lastly, it was reported that the Turks had marched from Philippopolis to Chirpan. All this showed that the danger was imminent, and that in a few days the storm would burst over the valley of the Tundja. Meanwhile the state of affairs had in no way improved. Plevna was still not taken, and the two weak columns in the Tundja valley had not effected a junction.

The position was becoming untenable ; the only thing left was to give up all the objects aimed at, and seek safety in a retreat to the top of the pass. However, Gurko, believing that Plevna would soon fall and that he would then receive the necessary reinforcements, was unwilling to abandon the valley of the Tundja to the Turks without fighting. Accordingly, seeing no hope of success in a frontal encounter, even in the strong position at Eski Zagra, as the latest news showed that the Turks were in overwhelming numbers, he determined to save him-

self by manœuvring. He hit on the following plan of operations: to abandon his line of retreat to Shipka, and transfer his base to Khainkoi, and strike at the extreme right of the Turks at Yeni Zagra; having defeated this body, he would profit by his superiority in cavalry and operate on the flank and rear of the columns advancing on Eski Zagra. The advantages this plan presented were—(1) that Suleiman, advancing on Eski Zagra, would beat the air; (2) that the line of retreat to Khainkoi would be preferable to that on Shipka, and a catastrophe would thus be avoided; (3) that should his operations against Yeni Zagra be successful, he would deal a heavy blow to the *moral* of the Turks; and (4) that by operating with his cavalry on their flank as they advanced, he might hope to check their advance on the Tundja valley. Presumably the Turks, finding Gurko on their flank at Yeni Zagra, would consider it necessary before entering the valley of the Tundja to retake that place, and drive us out of the valley of the Maritsa. At any rate it was impossible that they should think of leaving in our hands such an important strategical point as the former place. Fifthly, more or less time would be gained, during which Plevnia might be taken, and the force receive

sufficient reinforcements to cope with Suleiman. Taking into consideration all these advantages, and feeling that his retreat on Khain Bogaz was fairly secure, Gurko drew up the following report:—

“No. 19. 16th July, 1877. Kazanlik.

“To H.I.H. the Commander-in-Chief.

“Since my last report news have been received that at Karabunar (a station on the Yamboli branch, to the north of Tirnova-Seimenli) the army of Suleiman is concentrating, coming from Antivari.

“According to the accounts of Bulgarian fugitives from Adrianople, this army will reach 20,000, while Turkish accounts put it at 40,000. At present its concentration is incomplete, though to what extent we do not know. Considering that for more than a week no night trains have run, and how small the Turkish carriages are, and that it is only lately that the first portion of the force reached Karabunar, I conclude that it will be some little time before the concentration is complete.

“At present the troops already there are entrenching themselves. Suleiman's men are in a very bad state, according to the Bulgarians, badly clothed and fed, without proper supplies or tents. At Seimenli-

Tirnova there are some 6000 men, who are fortifying themselves. These are under Suleiman's orders, but were not with him in Montenegro, and have only lately joined the army now assembling. They are well clothed and equipped, and have tents. The whole army has as yet but little artillery, only some ten guns in all, apparently mountain guns.

"The cavalry consists mainly of Circassians and mounted Bashi-Bazouks, although one Lancer regiment was seen by our Dragoons. At Kayadjik (a wrecked station on the Philippopolis line) a considerable number of Bashi-Bazouks have come up, and some one and a half battalions of Mustafis. At Chirpan the troops assembling are Mustafis, and the troops that ran away from Shipka, and now come from Philippopolis. The position there is being fortified. At Philippopolis and to the west of it there are no troops: the Bashi-Bazouks attacked Rakhmanlia, but were beaten off by the inhabitants. As for the eastern district, there are about 2000 men at Slivno. This body has an outpost at Demir Kapa. At Yeni Zagra there are scarcely any troops, the greater part of them having gone to Karabunar.

"In consequence of intelligence received from Headquarters that the Shumla force is retreating on

Adrianople, I have ordered the Kiev Hussar regiment with two H.A. guns to push home a reconnaissance on Yeni Zagra to-day, the 16th, and if possible on Slivno, and have suggested to General Boreisha to send out reconnoitring parties towards the latter place.

“If the reports we now have of the weakness of the Turks at these two places are confirmed, we may, I think, conclude that the idea of the retreat from Shumla is scarcely credible, because in that case larger bodies would have been left at these places.

“From what I have reported, your Highness will be pleased to see that the present moment is the most favourable for the troops on this side the Balkans to defeat the army now assembling in detail: in a few days they will be insufficient for the purpose, and in five or six Suleiman’s army will endanger our position, especially when the dispersion of our forces is considered.

“In view of the instructions received by me from the Chief of the Staff, and the retention of General Boreisha’s brigade at Khainkoi for other purposes, I have not been able to attack Suleiman’s force. As for standing my ground at the Shipka Pass, that I

consider out of the question, because in case of disaster it would be physically impossible for me to get my whole force into the mountains, and a catastrophe would be unavoidable.

“I therefore propose, if I receive no reinforcements, to proceed in a few days to Yeni Zagra, so as to be able to retreat on Khain Bogaz, as there is a fairly strong position near that pass, where I could hold out against superior numbers, and in case of necessity I could, though with much loss, retreat into the pass itself. At the same time I consider it a sacred duty to inform your Highness that our retreat will be the signal for a general massacre of the Bulgarian inhabitants of Eski Zagra and Kazanlik and all the villages in the valley of the Tundja. I shudder to think that our temporary presence here should have brought such a terrible fate on the inhabitants of the district. Nor can I disguise from you that our retreat into the mountains, followed by a second descent into the valley of the Tundja, will, in face of the army now gathering against us, cost us severe losses.

“In consequence of these considerations I am determined to stand my ground at Yeni Zagra with my whole force to the last, being convinced that by manœuvring with my cavalry in the plain south of the

Lesser Balkans, I shall hinder Suleiman Pasha's advance for a long time, and that I shall get reinforcements soon enough for my purpose. But, as in accordance with the instructions of the Head Quarter Staff, I am to remain at the foot of the Shipka Pass, in order to carry into effect my intentions I need the decision of your Highness, and that in as short a time as possible, as any delay may have the most fatal consequences.

“(Signed) GURKO,

“General commanding the Advance Guard.”

Lastly, in another report sent to the Commander-in-Chief that same day (No. 1603), he announced the development of the enemy's advance at Yeni Zagra, and that he had determined, in order to ascertain his strength and whether he had received any reinforcements, to attack Yeni Zagra in full force on the 18th. In case of failure he intended to retreat to Khainkoi, but if he succeeded, his object was to renew the panic among the Turks, to occupy a greater extent of ground and some point on the line of communication between the Turkish forces assembling at Karabunar and those at Shumla.

Thus the object of his immediate operations was to

gain time, and the means adopted the shifting of his position to Yeni Zagra, and making his cavalry act on the flank and rear of the impending Turkish advance. Success was possible if there was no delay. That meant that we must either anticipate the Turks, or at least be in motion as soon as them.

Accordingly all was bustle at the headquarters of the advance guard, and the reply of the Commander-in-Chief was eagerly awaited. Soon after noon on the 16th the following order was received from the Chief of the Staff:—

“ In answer to your Excellency's report of the 16th, No. 19, H.I.H. the Commander-in-Chief has been pleased to command me to inform you that he quite agrees with all your representations and leaves you full liberty to act as you think fit. You have already been informed of the placing at your entire disposal of the 1st Brigade of the 9th Infantry Division and of a nine-pounder battery being sent to join you.

“ *Private.*—Lieut.-General Baron Krüdener has not yet begun his attack on Plevna, while yesterday, the 15th, a Turkish force of some 3000 infantry, with six guns and 300-400 cavalry, occupied Lovcha, Lieut.-Colonel Baklanov's small force of three squadrons and two guns being obliged to fall back before

it, and take post half-way between Lovcha and Selvi. To-morrow, the 17th, the Volynia infantry regiment with a battery will reinforce the Brian regiment at Selvi at an early hour, the whole being placed under the orders of Major-General Derojinski.

“Three regiments of the 16th Division have orders to march to-morrow from Turska Sliva to Ivanche, while the 13th Corps will advance to the road to Eski Djuma. The leading brigade is to-day at the village of Tserkovna, while the remainder is echeloned at intervals of half a day's march. These dispositions are made in case of a possible advance of the Turks, who are supposed to be concentrated at Shumla, though it is not known what their object is. According to reports from the Rustchuk force, there is only a small garrison in that place, and all the troops are on their way by Razgrad to Eski Djuma and Shumla. In the evening of the 14th and morning of the 15th Count Vorontsov-Dashkov was engaged at the village of Endrje (on the road from Rustchuk to Razgrad) with a body of the enemy marching from Rustchuk with a convoy, and defeated it, but we do not know in what direction it retreated.

“The Turkish advance guard, posted on the Osman Bazar road, retreated before ours yesterday evening,

on the latter, taking up a position at Djutin, but how far our cavalry could not ascertain.

“To-day or to-morrow Baron Krüdener proposes to attack the enemy.”

On the receipt of this communication Gurko determined without losing a moment to carry into execution his plan of assembling all his troops at Yeni Zagra on the flank of Suleiman's intended advance.

CHAPTER V.

Movement of the force to Yeni Zagra—Advance of Suleiman's army to Eski Zagra—Operations of the right column under Prince Nikolai—Affair at Karabunar—Retreat of the Bulgarian Contingent to Eski Zagra, leaving the cavalry at Karabunar.

HAVING arrived at this decision, Gurko gave orders to advance on Yeni Zagra in three columns. In the course of the 17th the following operations were to be carried out :—

THE LEFT COLUMN,

under Major-General Boreisha, consisting of the 1st and 2nd battalions and the 3rd (Rifles) company of the Sieva and Elets regiments, the 4th and 6th batteries of the 9th brigade and one squadron of Cossacks was to move from Khainkoi on the 17th and march by Orezary to Lodj, which it was to reach about 7 p.m.

THE CENTRE COLUMN,

under Major-General Tsvietsinski, with which was

General Gurko, consisted of the 4th Rifle Brigade, half battalion of Cossack infantry, two and a half squadrons of Cossacks, eight H.A. guns (two of the 10th and the 15th Don battery) and eight mountain guns. It was to leave Kazanlik on the 17th at 3 a.m. and advance by Sofulav, Kishla, Elgovo, and Balabandja to Chainakche. Between the two first named places it was to halt till two o'clock and cook.

THE RIGHT COLUMN,

under Prince Nikolai Maximilianovich, consisted of four Bulgarian battalions, the Dragoon Brigade, the Kiev Hussar regiment, three squadrons of Cossacks, the 16th H.A. battery, four mountain guns of the 1st Mountain battery, and a section of the 10th Don battery. It was to march from Yeni Zagra on the 17th to Kinderbe (near Dalboki), reaching that place about seven in the evening. At Eski Zagra were left two companies of the Bulgarian Contingent and one squadron of Cossacks, while to the south of the town a squadron of the Kiev Hussars was sent out to reconnoitre. Orders were given to cook no food at night nor make any camp-fires, and no wheeled carriage was to accompany the force, only pack animals.

The next day, the 18th, the troops were to continue their movement to Yeni Zagra, and attack the enemy's position near that town. The orders for the day were as follows :—

(1) The right column was to leave Kiuderbe at 4.30 a.m. and move along the high road to Yeni Zagra ; the cavalry, except such as was told off as an advance guard, was to form echelon to the right rear of the infantry.

(2) The centre column was to leave its bivouac at Chainakche at 3.30 a.m. and attack the enemy in the space between the high road and the village of Kavlikoi, endeavouring to keep its right in touch with the right column.

(3) The left column was to leave Lodj at 4.30 and attack the enemy's position from the north from Kartache (Korten), endeavouring to keep its right in touch with the left of the 4th Rifle Brigade.

Until all the columns were ready to attack, the artillery was to be the arm principally engaged. All baggage was to be left in camp, Gurko was to accompany the centre column.

Accordingly on the 17th the force moved on Yeni Zagra in three columns, moving at a great distance from each other (at first more than twenty miles

from wing to wing in a direct line) across the Lower Balkans, an obstacle which greatly hindered the maintenance of communication between them. The routes to be pursued for two days were carefully laid down, and their point of junction was Yeni Zagra, which was held by the enemy, whose strength, estimated at six to eight battalions, was approximately that of any one of our columns separately.

ADVANCE OF SULEIMAN'S ARMY TO YENI ZAGRA.

While the force under Gurko was rapidly advancing from the north, Suleiman's army was being brought by sea from Montenegro and pushed forward by rail to Adrianople, to effect a junction with Reüf's force which was then defending the line of the Balkans. This course had been determined on by the Turkish Government when we were advancing on Tirnova, and was mainly owing to the movements of the Advance Guard, which was looked on as menacing Adrianople. So great was the alarm caused by the passage of the Balkans by that force that orders were given to fortify a position between Derkos and Buyuk Chekmedje against a possible attack on Constantinople by Gurko.

At the head of the army destined to act against

Gurko stood Suleiman Pasha. He had been educated at the Military College at Constantinople, and entered the army as sub-lieutenant at the age of twenty-four, became later professor, and subsequently commandant, at the Military College, and after sixteen years' service was promoted to be Mushir. His distinguishing characteristics were energy and obstinacy.

The embarkation of his army began at Antivari on 4th July, 30,000 men, including 2000 cavalry, and eighteen mountain guns, being put on board twenty steam transports. On its arrival at Adrianople it was seen by the English military attaché, Fife Cookson, who was greatly impressed by the smartness and excellent discipline of the troops. At that time Adrianople was inundated by fugitives from the valley of the Tundja, and the fortifications of the town were still incomplete. Cookson remarks that the taking of the place might have ended the campaign, as the fall of such an important point would have led to a dreadful panic at Constantinople. At the time the direct line of advance from Shipka was almost entirely open to the Russians, as Reüf Pasha, who should have held the line of the Balkans from Karlov to Yamboli, had assembled the main part of his force at the latter place under the impres-

sion that the Russians would certainly advance by the Slivno Pass, and they meanwhile seized Shipka, which greatly facilitated the occupation by Gurko of the Kredich¹ and Khain Bogaz Passes. When the Russians seized Shipka, Reüf determined to await the coming up of Suleiman at Yeni Zagra and till then attempt no serious movement. He did practically nothing all the time, the only exception being a slight skirmish on 3rd July, in which the Turks took the offensive, while our troops several times drove him from the positions they had taken up. At last Suleiman came up and made his headquarters at Karabunar, with his left wing at Tirnova-Seimenli, and his right, Reüf's force, at Yeni Zagra. We must here remark that the first news of Suleiman's advance was received on 8th July from our minister at Athens, who sent information that 20,000 Turks were being disembarked at Enos. Suleiman's army did indeed begin its disembarkation on the 7th at Délé Agach, and by the 9th thirty-eight battalions had been landed, and Suleiman himself reached Adrianople on the 10th. There he received a telegram from the War Minister, dated the 9th, informing him of the state of affairs on the theatre of war and that Reüf

¹ Tvarditsa.

Pasha's force had been placed under his orders. "Our chief aim for the moment is not to allow the Russians to concentrate any large force in the Balkans, and to prevent them from threatening Osman's troops (at Plevna) and Achmed Eyoub's (near Rustchuk); for this purpose it is necessary to clear the whole country this side of the Balkans of the enemy and to drive him across the Balkans. The execution of this task is entrusted to your Excellency. I do not think it necessary to give you more detailed instructions, and will only add that it is imperative you should act as quickly as possible."

On the 11th Suleiman received from the Seraskierat the following telegram, bearing date the 10th :—

"We do not understand why Reüf, though he has sufficient forces at command, not only declines to take any action against Eski Zagra, but will not even make a reconnaissance in that direction, and wants to fall back to Tirnova-Seimenli. It is desirable that the station at Karabunar should be occupied, that Reüf should stand fast at Yeni Zagra, that attention should be paid to the state of Slivno, and that your Excellency should use your best efforts to check the enemy's advance until such time as you

begin your own." Further, the Seraskierat pointed out the importance of Yeni Zagra and the urgent need for securing that point.

The information collected by Suleiman at Adrianople as to the disposition of the Russian forces which had crossed the Balkans was not very accurate or definite, as the authorities there merely confirmed the statements contained in the above cited despatch of the 9th. The governor of Chirpan telegraphed that the Russians were four hours' march from that town; Reüf Pasha reported that Philippopolis was endangered, while Savfet Pasha reported from Philippopolis that the Russians had occupied Eski Zagra. Lastly, the commandant at Tirnova announced that a body of the enemy 15,000 strong was preparing to attack the station there. In consequence of these rumours Suleiman gave orders for his force to march to Karabunar station, and on the 15th July effected a junction with Reüf at Radino.

As he had absolutely no reliable information as to the strength of the enemy or the nature of the ground on which he was to act, he considered it his best plan to trust to what Reüf told him in this respect, as he had hitherto had charge of the defence of the Balkans, and must thus be in possession of

the necessary data for framing a plan of operations. He declared that Reüf told him that the main strength of the Russians was then concentrated at Eski Zagra, in consequence of which his first object was to capture that point.

The Seraskierat in its telegrams to him kept pointing out the necessity of securing Yeni Zagra to the full as the point which covered the head of the railway communications of his force. Consequently he was of opinion that Reüf's division should remain at that place, but Reüf, relying on his knowledge of the existing state of affairs, represented that it was sufficient to leave three battalions there. Suleiman agreed with him, and it was determined that the remainder of his division should take part in the attack on Eski Zagra.

His plan was to move on Eski Zagra, from which ran the direct route to Shipka, and at the same time threaten the Russians if they showed signs of intending to retreat on Khain Bogaz (Khainkoi). He had at his disposal some 30,000 men, including the troops brought from Montenegro, the Chirpan force, the remains of the Shipka battalions, called up from Philippopolis, and Reüf's 8000 Redifs. On his own showing his force did not exceed 28,000, estimating

the thirty-eight battalions he had brought with him at 15,000 with three or four mountain batteries; but in his despatch to the Seraskierat he reported that he had forty-one battalions, three field and two mountain guns, two squadrons of regular cavalry, and 200 Circassians. At that time Khulussi Pasha was at Chirpan with seven battalions, one mountain battery, and 150 Circassians, and at Yeni Zagra Reüf had fifteen battalions, one squadron, and 300 Circassians, one field and one mountain battery. Thus he had at his disposal, as against Gurko's force, sixty battalions, three squadrons of regular cavalry, and six or seven of Circassians, nine field and ten mountain guns, or some 28,000 men. Even if we accept this figure as correct, it will be seen that he largely outnumbered his opponent, who had only 12,000 to 13,000 men.

On the 11th he received a telegram from Reüf to the effect that the Russians were preparing to attack Slivno and Yamboli in force. On the 13th he reached Karabunar by train, and on the 15th held a consultation with Reüf at Radino, whither the latter had come with a large escort, six battalions, a battery, and some Circassians, Suleiman himself bringing five battalions with him. Evidently the Pashas were in a desperate fright! At this meeting Reüf gave him

no information about our troops, or of our infantry being at Khainkoi. So seeing no reason to be alarmed about his right, Suleiman determined to mass his troops in the first instance against Eski Zagra, and recover that place. Reüf proposed that the two forces should co-operate, but Suleiman preferred that the two should move concentrically, and unite near Eski Zagra. Reüf of course could only submit. Thus the place chosen for their junction was a place held by the enemy. Not only so, but the exact point fixed on by Suleiman, the village of Arabdjikoi, was that which our three columns were to reach on the night of the 17th.

On the 17th Suleiman's army advanced in three columns on Eski Zagra. Of these the right consisted of twelve battalions, four batteries, one squadron, and some 2000 Circassians, and moved from Yeni Zagra under the orders of Reüf. The centre, forty-one battalions, four batteries, two squadrons, and 500 Circassians, about 16,000 men, advanced from Karabunar under Suleiman in person. The left, under Khulussi Pasha, marched from Chirpan, and had seven battalions, four guns, and 150 Circassians, in all about 4000 men. The centre column was disposed as follows: Shiukri Pasha's brigade with

the cavalry leading, while the main body had Redjeb's brigade on the right, Arifa Pasha's in the centre, and Vessel's on the left; then came the baggage, with Sali Pasha's brigade in the rear. Three battalions and two guns were left at Yeni Zagra, and one battalion at Chirpan. There was such a lack of horses that the regimental surgeons with the field ambulances had to be left at Karabunar.

Reüf's column reached Yeni Zagra that day at 8 a.m., and at 10 resumed its march on Eski Zagra. As it issued from the village of Karabunar, the head of the column came in contact with our right, on its march to Yeni Zagra. Suleiman did not reach Arabdjikoi by nightfall that day, and not caring to risk a night march in face of the evening, halted some eight or nine miles from Karabunar. The reason for this slowness of movement was that his force, being arranged in something nearly resembling battle order, could not move along the road, but had to take to the fields.

The left column started from Chirpan that morning, but it is not known how far it marched. At first starting the Turkish front extended some forty miles. Apparently no attempt was made to keep touch between the columns.

On the 18th the march was continued, as slowly as before.

As we have seen, Gurko's object was to mass all his troops on the 17th on the line Kiuderbe-Lodja (some fourteen miles), and on the 18th attack Yeni Zagra, while Suleiman was advancing on a line thirty-three miles in length, to attack Eski Zagra on the same day. Thus each was on the line of retreat of his opponent, Suleiman making for Shipka, and Gurko for Tirnova-Seimenli. But our force had an alternative line of retreat on Khainkoi.

OPERATIONS OF OUR RIGHT COLUMN.—AFFAIR AT
KARABUNAR ON THE 17TH.

The infantry of this column with a squadron of Cossacks started from Eski Zagra at noon on the 17th and the cavalry and artillery at 2.30. Half a battalion of the Bulgarian Contingent, with a squadron of Cossacks under Colonel Krasnov, was left at that place to patrol the roads, Chirpan and Kalofer, and a squadron of the Kiev Hussars was sent out to reconnoitre in a southerly direction. The inhabitants accompanied the departing troops with cries of "God keep you!" "May you beat the Turks!" Crowds of armed Bulgarians followed the column, in the hope of taking part in the fight.

The troops were glad of the order to advance, all being sick of the long halt, and eager for action. However, the cavalry was not in a satisfactory condition, the long reconnaissances, burning heat, and irregular feeding having greatly damaged the horses, many of them having become broken-winded. The fodder was sufficient in quantity, but the want of practice in long marches, and in unsaddling at the proper time had done more harm than the actual exertion. Another mistake was feeding them not with grain but new-mown corn, which the men cut with their swords and gave to the horses just as it was.

As for the Bulgarian Contingent, it was burning to be put to the test. After crossing the Danube it had always been in the rear, and taken no part in the engagements. It is true that at the taking of the Shipka heights the 5th and 6th battalions had formed part of the attacking columns, but they had done nothing but pick up the wounded. After this the Contingent remained several days at Kazanlik, and on the 11th marched to Eski Zagra, where it remained till the 17th, only doing patrol duty. Not unnaturally such inaction was most displeasing to the officers. Many of them had joined the Contingent from distant parts of

Russia and of course with the wish to come to close quarters without delay. It is only fair to say that most of the men composing it were ill-trained and ill-disciplined, but with experienced officers they ought to have been able to give a good account of themselves, especially in the small affairs, of which there were so many. They would have thus gradually gained confidence and experience. "But," says one of the force, "the very existence of the Contingent had been forgotten apparently." On the 16th it was marched out of Eski Zagra, seven miles to the south, and early next morning received orders to return. On reaching the town, the men learnt that they were to be attached to the right column, and join in the attack on Yeni on the 18th.

In order to obtain more accurate information as to the enemy, two reconnaissances were pushed forward that day. The first, two squadrons of the Kazan dragoons under Colonel Bielogrudov, moved on Yeni Zagra. It was intended to ascertain (1) the strength of the enemy in that place, (2) whether reinforcements were coming up and from what quarter, and (3) whether any of his troops were meditating a movement from that place and in what direction. It was

to halt for the night half way between Eski and Yeni Zagra, and continue to reconnoitre the next day, but to avoid a fight and report to Gurko at Yelgovo, to which he was to transfer his headquarters on the 17th.

The other was carried out by a squadron of the Kiev Hussars under Major Karyeev. It was to make its way by Arabadji to Azably, and there send out patrols towards Karabunar and the south. At night-fall it was to retire behind the Syiutli and the next morning move along the high roads towards Yeni Zagra with the main body, scouting over the ground about the railway line, and if possible tear up the portion of the latter to the south of Yeni Zagra. In addition, in case the necessity should arise for retreating to the north, two parties were sent to survey the passes through the Lesser Balkans, those from Dalboki to Yelgovo and Chirkovo to Balabandja.

On leaving Eski Zagra, the column marched through a fertile country. Right and left stretched fields of tall maize and golden patches of wheat, which nodded gracefully to the least gust. Here and there were fruit-trees, chiefly broad-leaved walnuts and almonds. In the distance smoke rose from villages set on fire by the Bashi-Bazouks, and the

blackened walls of wrecked houses lined the path. Often, close to the road, they came upon the corpses of Turks and Bulgarians, fraught with pestilence. Many bore the marks of terrible tortures.

It was five in the afternoon, and the column was trudging wearily forward, the briskness of the morning having departed. The severe heat had taken effect. At this moment word was brought from Colonel Bielogrudov that the Turks were advancing from Yeni Zagra, and that he had fallen back, fighting, to the village of Urokvitse. He had been engaged with Reüf's men, who had left Yeni that morning at nine, and after six or seven hours' march had halted at the farm of Karabunar. On resuming their march, they sighted our troops at no great distance and opened an artillery fire. It was plain that in retreating to Urokvitse, Bielogrudov left the front of the right column exposed.

To ascertain the truth of the intelligence received and the strength of the enemy, Prince Eugene took the Astrakhan regiment and a section of the 16th Horse Artillery battery and moved forward at a trot. The ground was quite level, with the exception of some few hillocks. Advancing along the high road as far as a spring, our cavalry sighted a line of

Circassians, and on a mound to the right what looked like a general's staff. To drive off this group, His Highness ordered Captain Usov to open fire on it. A couple of shells flew towards it, and the horsemen vanished, but at the same time clouds of smoke rose to the right of the mound, and several shells fell near the spring. It appeared that the Turks had a battery admirably masked among the maize, to the south of Karabunar. A succession of puffs of smoke showed that the enemy must have some twelve guns. Then our cavalry fell back about half a mile, and opened so as to let the 16th battery take ground on the high road and on each side of it and come into action. The Bulgarian Contingent soon came up, the 1st battalion deploying to the right of the battery, and the 2nd to the left; both threw out thick swarms of skirmishers, the cavalry falling back into second line. The enemy kept up a heavy fire on us, but their shells fell short at least fifty yards, and did not burst. Our skirmishers lined a long ditch, but did not fire for a time.

Soon there arose on their left a rattle of musketry; it was the Circassians pursuing our Dragoons. The 2nd and 4th companies of the 3rd battalion opened on them, and they promptly fled helter-skelter.

Meanwhile the cannonade continued on both sides, their fire doing us no harm, while ours was probably equally innocuous, the range being too great. When the remaining guns came up, the whole opened once more on the enemy's masses, which kept us from getting within effective range of the Turkish battery. No further attempts were made by the enemy to attack, and our troops hesitated to advance, not knowing in what force the enemy might be. The number of their guns, and the way their position was fortified, pointed to their far outnumbering us.

To meet a possible advance of the Turks on our right a column was sent under Colonel Korevo, made up of the Kiev Hussars, two squadrons of the Kazan regiment, a squadron of the 26th Cossacks, and two guns of the 10th Cossack battery. It had orders to turn the enemy's left and then attack. It was 6 p.m. when the cavalry formed up for the movement. The Hussars were in first line, with a section of artillery in their rear, with the Dragoons in echelon on their right and the Cossacks to their right again. Moving round some thick cover, the cavalry advanced between it and the villages of Chitali and Chavlikoi. It was growing dark, but the cavalry continued to advance and, when on a level with the enemy's left,

wheeled by squadrons to the left and moved towards the high road, with the villages of Bayasli and Karabunar on its right. The enemy did not await attack, but retreated. The cavalry continued its advance towards the high road, with the intention of attacking the bodies of the enemy to the north of it, but these retreated. At this point dense masses were discovered near the high road, to the left of our horsemen. Again changing front to the left, and throwing out a thick cloud of skirmishers, the cavalry advanced in the direction of Eski Zagra, so as to take these masses in rear.

Before the movement was complete, the skirmishers reported that the masses in question were the Bulgarian battalions. These and the artillery had seen troops advancing from Yeni Zagra, and were on the point of opening fire on them, when they found out that they were our own cavalry. It being now quite dark, the latter attempted nothing further but bivouacked near Dalboki. The rest of the force retired behind the Dalboki stream to await further orders.

While the above movements were in progress Major Karyéev's squadron had reached the village of Azably unmolested, and sent out patrols to the south

and south-east. One of these had encountered a body of Circassians with two guns, and had retired towards Azably, whereupon Karyéev hastened to its rescue. The Circassians were repulsed and pursued, but encountered artillery fire, while two squadrons rode round them and cut them off from Azably.

Soon after several battalions of infantry came on the scene, and the Hussars found themselves quite surrounded, but succeeded in breaking through the Circassians. At this juncture Karyéev heard sounds of firing from the high road between Eski and Yeni Zagra. Conjecturing that the main body was engaged, he determined to manœuvre so as to keep the enemy from rendering assistance to their comrades. As we already know, the troops he had encountered belonged to Suleiman's centre column, and were the advance guard of Shiukri Pasha's brigade, with some cavalry.

In the course of the day the Hussars discovered that the enemy was advancing from the railway line, his infantry having reached Arabadjikoi, as had been reported to Prince Nikolai. It is possible, however, that the infantry belonged to the advance guard of the centre column, or that they took dismounted

cavalry for infantry. The Prince had received intelligence as to the advance of the enemy from a Cossack piquet on the Muratli road. All these reports were received in the evening and night of the 17th at the bivouac near Dalboki.

The parties sent out to survey the passes of the Lesser Balkans reported as follows :—That from the Astrakhan regiment which had reconnoitred the Dalboki Pass declared that that route was entirely unsuited for artillery and trains. That which had been sent to the Pass near the village of Chirkovo, had been unable to carry out its orders, as on the retreat of Bielogrudov's squadron the Circassians had occupied the village, and it could not make its way into the Pass.

Meanwhile a Cossack came in from Colonel Krasnov at Eski Zagra and reported that some nine battalions with artillery were encamped at Arabadjikoi, not above six miles from the town, and seemed to intend to advance further. As this coincided with Major Karyéev's report, there were good grounds for accepting it.

Thus the position of the Eski Zagra force had changed materially. It left that place with the intention of attacking Yeni Zagra on the 18th in

conjunction with the centre and left columns, but meanwhile it turned out that the enemy had a considerable force on the high road near Karabunar, and near Arabadjikoi. The latter might, by marching on Eski Zagra, place itself on the only direct line of retreat to Kazanlik and Shipka, the two other routes being, as we have seen, the one impracticable, and the other blocked by the Circassians.

It was impossible for it to force its way to Yeni Zagra, nor was it desirable, as it was uncertain when the other columns would reach that place. Moreover, in not holding Eski Zagra we should be handing over to the Turks some tens of thousands of Bulgarians who had sought our protection. In consequence of this, and the reports received in the course of the night, confirming the intelligence that the Turks were advancing on Eski Zagra, the commander of the column determined, in spite of the exhaustion of his men, to fall back on Eski with his whole infantry, four mountain guns, the section of the 10th battery, and a squadron of Hussars, and effect a junction with the troops left at that place. The rest of the cavalry was left at Dalboki under Prince Eugene. It was to give support to the other columns as they issued from the mountains to attack Yeni Zagra, and if this fell

through, to make demonstrations, draw the enemy's attention, and if he proved to be marching on Eski, hold him in check.

Difficult indeed was the position of this small body of cavalry, some 1100 sabres with six guns, with the enemy on three sides, and on the fourth the chain of the Lesser Balkans, almost inaccessible to artillery. Night fell, and it was black as pitch. Strict orders had been given to light no fires. No one took off his accoutrements, and the horses remained saddled.

CHAPTER VI.

Movements of the centre and left columns—Taking of Yeni Zagra
—Advance on Karabunar—Operations of the cavalry before
Karabunar on the 18th July.

THE CENTRE COLUMN.

THIS column commenced its advance at 2.30 a.m. under the personal supervision of Gurko. The day proved a very hot one, and the distance to be traversed from Kazanlik to Chainakchi was some twenty-seven miles. From one to five a halt was made near the village of Kishlo, and the men cooked their food. Here instructions were received for the attack on Yeni Zagra next day. These were that the column was to start from its bivouac at Chainakchi at 3.30 a.m. the next day, march on Yeni Zagra and attack the enemy in the space between the high road and the village of Kavlikoi, and endeavour to keep its right in touch with their right column.

When the march was resumed the heat had lessened perceptibly, but the way lay up-hill all the

time. The Bulgarians, alarmed by the raids of the Circassians, told the troops as they passed that the latter were close at hand and begged them to drive them off. In one hamlet the people declared that there had been a battle between the Russians and Turks beyond the Lesser Balkans, and apparently the Turks had had the best of it, as the former had vanished from the neighbourhood.

Night was already falling when the column was still on its way: at every step exhaustion made itself more evident, and men's eyes shut from sheer weariness. But it was not till eleven that they halted for the night. The troops had been on the move from 2 a.m., twenty-one hours, with the exception of a four hours' halt, and had in that time covered twenty-seven miles along a dusty road, and in burning heat.

Here it may be appropriate to quote part of the description given by Fedorov, who took part in this first campaign south of the Balkans:—

“At 4 a.m. we started from Kazanlik along the road to Yeni Zagra. The mounted men might contemplate with complacency the march that awaited us, but not so the Rifles. The day before the 13th battalion had been sent to the Shipka Pass,

a distance of eleven miles, two of which had been up a height of 3000 feet. It had scarcely reached its destination when a Cossack brought the order for it to immediately retrace its steps and rejoin the Kazanlik force. There was no alternative but to obey, and so it had to cover close on fifty miles almost without a halt. The other battalion, the 14th, had been on outpost duty the day before, the 16th, and had found it no light work, the more so that the biscuits served out did not suffice to keep up the men's strength, and even those were mouldy, and the men threw them away, not caring for the trouble of carrying them. Darkness was begining to fall, and our goal was not yet in sight; the Rifles began to halt and keep back the artillery. The soldiers lay down by whole ranks on the roadside, exhausted by the long march and the heat. It grew darker and darker. The Rifles, encouraged by the nearness of the bivouac, struggled on in silence, scarcely able to put one foot before the other. The halt for the night had become the only thing we thought about, and meanwhile we marched and marched, and there seemed no end to the road. Once more the soldiers lay down in whole ranks. At

last at 1 a.m. we began to approach the halting-place."

They were to halt for the night, or rather for four hours as before, near the village of Chainakchi, short of the pass through the Lesser Balkans, which was in a barren country. They halted right on the road, throwing out pickets. Next day they started again at 3.30 a.m., and after two hours' march reached the defile which was supposed to be held by the enemy. But instead of Turks they encountered Gurko, who after the usual greetings announced that the Turks had taken flight and fled, a piece of news which soon spread through the ranks. The regiments pulled themselves together, and stepped out more briskly, as if they wanted to catch up the enemy. Cheerfulness replaced the dogged silence which had hitherto reigned among them. When they learnt that the news had been a fiction of Gurko's to give them fresh courage, his object had already been attained.

Meanwhile the road up the pass became steeper and steeper, and progress more and more difficult. After making ten miles from the halting-place, the centre column reached about 7.30 a.m. a rock, from which the descent began. It was still some five miles

from the town of Yeni Zagra, which lay on a level plain, except towards the south where some outlying spurs of the mountains approached it. Its northern portion was all in flames. As the column had made twenty-seven miles the day before, Gurko called a halt of half an hour. Meanwhile the left column had anticipated it in descending into the plain, and set to work, without waiting for its comrades, and as the centre column had five miles to cover even after the beginning of the descent, there would be two and a half hours before it could arrive.

THE LEFT COLUMN.

This column was to leave Khainkoi on the 17th and march by Ore Zari to Lodja, reaching there by seven in the evening. On the 18th it was to leave Lodja at 4.30 a.m., march on Yeni Zagra, and attack the enemy's position from the north, i.e. the Kartacha side. As we already know, General Boreisha's column had reached Khainkoi on the 5th and posted itself there so as to cover the retreat of the advance guard if necessary. Occupying the issue from the defile, two versts from the village of Khainkoi, it proceeded to entrench itself. Till the 16th the force remained where it was. That afternoon Gurko

received permission to act independently, and the 1st brigade of the 9th division was placed at his disposal. The most urgent dispositions were at once made, and on the night of the 16th Boreisha's force, encamped at Khainkoi, received orders to march on Yeni Zagra. By the morning all was ready for a start, and precisely at noon the column got under way. The troops marched in light order, without tents or knapsacks, but carrying biscuits for five days. Cartridges and surgical appliances were carried on pack animals.

It was not very hot, and with short halts the column easily made Lodja, where it halted for the night, having covered ten miles. No news of the enemy had been obtained during the day. No fires were lighted, and strict silence was maintained in camp, but the Bulgarians, who had followed in crowds, set fire to some houses, and the bright glare could be seen a long distance. Next day they started at 4 a.m., and reached Yeni about eight, before the other columns. The centre column was behind-hand, owing to the exhaustion of the men; the right had returned to Eski Zagra.

On approaching Yeni it proved that the enemy had evacuated the town, having set it on fire in

several places, and withdrawn to a very strongly fortified position close to the railway station. It was a small but regular quadrangular work, the rear face being the railway embankment, the other three faces having strong parapets of the profile of a redoubt, with ditches. The loopholes were so arranged that the defenders could fire without leaving their quarters, and there were traverses which formed a second line of defence.

The ground in front of this work was quite level, and afforded no cover to our men. The railway station made an excellent keep. The garrison consisted of three battalions of Nizams and two of Mustafis, with six long-range Krupp guns, in addition to some 2000 mounted Circassians. This at any rate was the estimate made by us on the spot, but the Turks maintain that there were only three battalions, not nearly 2000 Circassians, and say nothing definite about the number of guns. Part of the Turkish infantry lined the railway, and flanked the side faces of the work with their fire.

At 8 a.m. the left column deployed and formed for the attack. The 2nd battalion of the Elets regiment, and its 1st, 2nd, and 3rd rifle companies, with sixteen guns, were told off to attack the north-east side of the town,

and for the north-west the 3rd battalion of the same and the 3rd rifle company of the Siev regiment. The remaining troops, viz. the 1st battalion Elefs regiment and 1st and 2nd battalions Siev regiment, formed the reserve. The Turks met their advance with such a heavy cross fire from the railway line and the redoubt that Gurko gave orders to await the coming up of the 4th Rifle Brigade, keeping up an artillery and rifle fire in the meantime. He sent orders to the brigade to turn to the right and form up to the west and south-west of the town, to the right of General Boreisha's force, thus threatening the line of retreat of the Turks. Three squadrons of Cossacks were sent to guard his right flank and also threaten the Turks' line of retreat.

At 9 a.m. the centre column debouched on to the plain. The 14th and 16th battalions, with the 15th Don battery, formed the fighting line, in two lines, with the battery in the interval of the battalions. The general reserve was formed by the 15th battalion, while the 13th was still to the north of the mountains, and came down with the baggage in the evening. The north-west corner of the town was the point to which the column was to head.

Before reaching the town the battery came smartly into action on the right of the centre column, its escort, the 1st company of the 14th, having to advance a long distance at the double to keep up with it.

About eleven the 2nd and 3rd companies of the 16th battalion were close to the town, while about the same time the 2nd company of the 14th wheeled about and opened a hot fire on the western face of the Turkish entrenchment. The fire of the 4th and 6th batteries also set the railway station ablaze, and the Circassians fled from the field in a body. All three batteries, unlimbering about 1200 yards from the enemy, opened a well-directed fire of shrapnel, the 4th and 6th batteries on the east of the town, with their left thrown forward, and the 15th Cossack more to the west. This heavy cross fire made the Turks meditate a retreat.

Hereupon our men advanced to the assault, broke into the entrenchment, and seized the railway line. The attack was headed in the centre by the 10th company Elets regiment, and the 3rd rifle and 4th companies of the Siev; on the left by the 2nd battalion of the Elets regiment, supported by four guns of the 4th battery. On the right, as soon as the

skirmish line of the 16th Rifles had passed the town, the half company under Sub-Lieutenant Banfal headed the rush on the enemy's works.

As when the attack was made Gurko knew that the right column was engaged beyond Karabunar, the 16th battalion had orders as soon as it was over to re-form, the pursuit being left to the 14th, with injunctions not to go too far. The 15th did not cross the railway line, but remained in reserve, guarding the high-road from Eski Zagra. The infantry being thus unable to push the pursuit, it was entrusted to the cavalry. Even before the Turks had begun to retreat, Major-General Tsvietsinski ordered Colonel Kurnakov, with three squadrons of Cossacks and two guns of the 15th battery, to occupy the village of Burudji, through which lay the Turkish line of retreat.

In retreating from their entrenchment the Turks were subjected to a heavy cross fire. The 2nd company of the 14th Rifles, under Captain Tukulov, lining the railway, caused them heavy loss, being itself under cover. The riflemen picked them off as they pleased at a distance of some 300 yards. The enemy made for the mountains, carrying off his guns by the village of Yurlemish. Some of them,

retiring in good order, took up a fresh position with a fairly deep stream in its front, which had steep banks and a slimy bottom. To drive them from it, Colonel Bejanov of the 14th Rifles sent forward half of the 1st company, which, finding a ford, skirmished through the village, and seizing its further end, opened a hot fire on the Turks, who thereupon abandoned their position. Meanwhile the skirmishers of the 2nd company of the 14th succeeded in making their way into the wood near Yurlemish and joining those of the Siev regiment. Many of the trees were used as posts of vantage by the Turkish sharpshooters, who were dislodged by the well-aimed fire of the Rifles. The pursuit was energetically carried on and the Turks dealt with without mercy. Their cruelties at Shipka were still fresh in our men's memories, and the officers had great difficulty in checking their thirst for vengeance. The 14th did not advance beyond the wood, but was there re-formed and marched back again.

The further pursuit was kept up by three squadrons of Cossacks and the 15th battery, under Colonel Kurnakov, and one gun was captured. The Turkish retreat soon became a rout. The defenders of the entrenchments "scattered like peas from a pod," says

Gurko, and fled southward, throwing away arms, accoutrements, cloaks and boats, and trusting to their agility for safety. Our troops pursued them some two and a half miles, strewing the road with corpses. Their skirmishers posted on the stream to the west of the camp were annihilated, the stream being in places red with blood. More than 800 corpses lay in the entrenchments and on the line of retreat. The trophies of the victory were two long-range Krupp guns, one captured, loaded with case, by the 1st company of the 14th Rifles, and the other by the Don squadron. There also fell into our hands many stand of arms, and a whole railway train of twenty carriages, laden with ammunition and supplies, but no engine. The town was on fire, and continued so for a week, the main street and the best houses being utterly destroyed. The destruction of the town and station was largely the work of the Bulgarians, who seized the belongings of the Turks, looted their camp and the captured train, and carried off the contents to their houses, which the Turks had previously ransacked. Our losses were, Captain Petrov, of the 21st Cossacks, killed, one staff officer and five field officers wounded, amongst them being Lieut.-Colonel Kozoriès, of the Siev regiment; rank and file,

fourteen killed, eighty-four wounded, and one missing; total, 106 men. The chief loss was in the 1st brigade of the 9th division.

As we have already shown, Gurko knew when he made the attack that the right column was engaged at Karabunar, and therefore was determined as soon as the place was taken to move in the direction of Eski Zagra, leaving at Yeni only the Rifle Brigade. But unfortunately our troops were led away by the pursuit and could not be got in hand again till about 3.30 p.m., when they were put in motion along the high road to Eski Zagra. The Rifle Brigade was not ready till some hours later, when it marched to Avliyany, and there bivouacked for the night. The weather was cold and there were no provisions, many of the officers even being without tea, and but little could be scraped together in the village.

Meanwhile Gurko after a short halt led the 1st brigade to Karabunar to the assistance of the right column, but on reaching the place found it empty, and learnt that the enemy had gone off to Djuranli and our men to Eski Zagra. We must remark that since the 18th he had had no news whatever from the latter place, all information having been sent in

a roundabout way and not reaching him till the morning of the 20th.

OPERATIONS OF THE CAVALRY BEFORE KARABUNAR
ON THE 18th JULY.

We have already said that on the night of the 18th Prince Nicolas of Leuchtenberg, the commander of the right column, in consequence of the changed conditions, and the well-ascertained fact that the Turks were advancing from the station at Karabunar, retreated from the town of that name on the high road towards Eski Zagra with the Bulgarian contingent, four mountain guns, a section of the 10th Cossack battery, and one squadron of the Kiev Hussars, leaving behind the remainder of his cavalry under Prince Eugene of Leuchtenberg.

It consisted of the Astrakhan and Kazan Dragoons, three squadrons of the Kiev Hussars, two squadrons of Cossacks, and the 6th H.A. battery, in all about 1100 sabres. It had orders to support the centre and left columns on their emerging from the mountains and attacking Yeni Zagra. If this should prove impossible, then it was to demonstrate, and endeavour to keep the enemy in play, and if he advanced on Eski Zagra, to check him. We know that

this small force was confronted by that of Reüf Pasha, twelve battalions with cavalry and artillery. Thus the task assigned to it was no light one.

At dawn on the 18th the force was already on the alert eagerly watching for the enemy, but nothing could be seen but a chain of Circassian sentinels. It was imperative to discover whether the enemy still held his position of the night before. He might have received information during the night that our two columns were advancing from the north on Yeni Zagra, and be marching against them, leaving this line of sentries as a blind. When the force left camp, the orders were that the scouts were neither to fall back nor form up, but act as independent skirmishers; the Cossack squadrons were to guard the flanks, the one nearest the mountains endeavouring to get into touch with the outposts of the centre column. Just as they were starting the Hussars reported that there were some Circassian pickets in their front, and the Cossacks on the left that there were some hundreds of Circassians round Chirkovo and Kesbetli.

At 5.30 the force moved out in one column, headed by a squadron of the Kiev Hussars, another of the Kazan Dragoons, and a section of the 16th battery. No sooner did this advance guard reach

the well where they had been engaged the day before, when it was met with a volley from some guns posted in the same place as on the 17th. Presently on the heights beyond Karabunar appeared bodies of the enemy's infantry and cavalry. It was thus evident that the Turks had stood fast in their positions of the preceding day, and accordingly it was determined to refuse our centre, and form two columns to turn the enemy's flanks. Two squadrons of Hussars were left in the enemy's front, athwart the *chaussée*, supported by a squadron of the Kazans, and supplemented by the other squadron of Hussars when it came back from Eski Zagra. This body was to watch the enemy closely, pushing boldly forward if he retreated, and falling back slowly if he advanced. As the ground on the enemy's right was quite open, the turning movement was to be made mounted, the column placed under Colonel Bielogrudov consisting of two squadrons of the Kazan Dragoons, a squadron of Cossacks and a section of the 16th battery. Its orders were (1) to form echelon to the right and threaten the enemy's left with its guns, and (2) to co-operate with the centre as it advanced or fell back, keeping its formation in echelon.

The ground on the enemy's right was, on the contrary, very broken, being studded with hillocks, copses, thickets, and vineyards, so the turning movement there was to be effected by a squadron of the Astrakhans and one of Cossacks dismounted. These were to move in open order through the thickets and vineyards towards the mountains and dislodging the Circassians, get into touch with the columns advancing on *Yeni Zagra*. The remaining troops, three squadrons of the Astrakhan and one of the Kazan regiments, and four guns of the 16th battery, were posted as a general reserve near the main road, to the west of the guard-house.

Thus we had fourteen squadrons and six guns spread out over some two miles of country, to meet an enemy of an estimated strength of four to six battalions, six to eight guns, and several hundred Circassians. Their actual number of battalions was, as we know, twelve.

About 7 a.m. the Turks assumed the offensive. From a mound in advance of our outposts their movements could be clearly traced. They were in column of battalions with guns in the interval, a thick swarm of Circassians preceding the infantry. Our advanced troops began to fall back slowly under

the fire of the Circassians. At this juncture, on our right the two guns of the 16th began an artillery duel with those of the enemy. Hereupon the Turks halted, and so did our men. After several rounds Colonel Bielogrudov ordered his men to fall back a short distance. It was reported from our left that the Turks were trending to the right. Instantly our advanced troops and supports moved forward, and the right wing brought its guns into action against the Circassians and Turkish artillery at some 1600 yards. Hereupon the latter again turned its fire on our right, and soon after the Turks again advanced some hundreds of yards, and our right, under a rain of shells, fell back a little, especially as the enemy began to mass more and more against it.

While such was the course of events on the centre and right, on our left the Dragoons and Cossacks were exchanging musketry fire with the Circassians, but being reinforced by a squadron of Hussars, received orders to break through at any cost and establish communication with the other columns, and learn what they were doing. As early as between a quarter and half-past seven shots had been heard which seemed to proceed from the mountains in the direction from which our two columns were to

emerge, but we had no information as to how they were faring. Captain Voïnov, of the Kiev Hussars, succeeded in breaking through the Circassians with a party of his regiment, but was afterwards surrounded by several squadrons of them, and in the evening returned to the camp of his regiment, after having made his way into the mountains, without falling in with the other columns.

It was past noon, and the stray shots from the mountains had long ceased, and still there was no news of the other columns. Prince Eugene's force continued to hold a line reaching from the mountains almost to the village of Chavlikoi. About 2 p.m. we noticed that the enemy was preparing for an advance. In order to ascertain his exact intentions, a squadron was sent forward in front, and one to the right flank. Their orders were to push forward briskly close on the heels of their mounted skirmishers, Colonel Bielogrudov's force supporting them, and the main body of the centre advancing at the same time. As soon as our advance reached the line of Circassian skirmishers, and our right opened fire, the Turks increased their artillery fire and advanced, driving in our right with columns of infantry and masses of horsemen. Then instantly the reserve

moved forward at a trot to the right, the leading squadrons of Hussars began to fall back, and the four guns with their escort of Dragoons were withdrawn to some rising ground near the main road. Here the Turks were to be held in check by the Bulgarian Contingent, which had come up from Eski Zagra in support of the cavalry.

We have seen that the Contingent had on the 17th marched from Karabunar to the Dalboki, where it halted for the night. Scarcely had the rosy precursors of the dawn risen above the blue mountains, and the pale stars had not yet given place to the coming day, when the Bulgarian battalions were already stepping out briskly along the road from Eski Zagra. But when they had marched about a mile and a quarter it was discovered that the two mountain guns were missing; the pace was slackened, and an orderly sent back to camp to look for them. It turned out that it was all the fault of the officer in charge of them, who had overslept himself.

About a mile and a quarter from the town the Bulgarians bivouacked, and were soon joined by Lieutenant Jivarev, who had been sent out towards Chirpan on the 15th with a body of picked men to smash up the small bands of Bashi-Bazouks. The

news he brought was not very reassuring; he had been unable to carry out his instructions, being surrounded by numbers of regular cavalry, and the flying Bulgarian inhabitants were unanimous in declaring that Suleiman was advancing in force from Adrianople. Two courses were now open to the Eski Zagra column, either to stand its ground at that place till the other columns came up, or to force its way through the enemy at Djuranli, and then make for Yeni Zagra, to effect a junction with the other columns.

Prince Nikolai determined to adopt the former course, and so set his men in motion towards Yeni Zagra. The troops were already cooking their food, but they were ordered to throw it away, and weary as they were, once more trudged along the dusty road, swallowing the choking dust, till, as on the day before, they took to the fields and stumbled wearily through the maize and over the furrows.

Meanwhile at 2.30 p.m. we had on our right, in a line with the village of Chatalu, three squadrons and two guns in first line, six squadrons in echelon to the right and rear, and four squadrons athwart the main road. From 2 to 5 p.m. our thirteen squadrons and six guns held the enemy in check, he having in

this action, as was then estimated, six battalions of infantry, eight to ten guns, and from 1500 to 2000 Circassians and cavalry. The evidence of many witnesses called on the trial of Suleiman Pasha, shows that Reüf and those with him thought that they had before them a strong force. Towards five o'clock the enemy began to retire beyond Djuranli, and at the same time a thick swarm of Circassians bore down on our mounted skirmishers. The 1st company of the 3rd Bulgarian battalion was called up to support the cavalry, Captain Fedorov, of the 1st Turkestan Rifles, commanding it. This company was placed in ambush in a watercourse which lay in the line of retreat of our force. Our cavalry skirmishers crossed this by the bridge, and thus enticed the Circassians within point-blank range of the volleys of the Bulgarians. The unexpected fire made them draw rein, and then Captain Fedorov with a cheer led his company out of the watercourse, and poured a hail of bullets into them. This was the first encounter between the Bulgarians and the Turks. The former lost one killed and six wounded in the affair, and it showed they had excellent fighting qualities in spite of their slight training, and were intelligent, cool, and brave. After this our

cavalry fell back and bivouacked at Aidenli. Three parties of the Astrakhan Dragoons were sent out to reconnoitre the ground between Chavlikoi, Buyuk, Arabadji, and Djuranli. One of them, under Cornet Eichholtz, brought in about 8 p.m. the intelligence that a large body of the enemy was near the villages of Djuranli and Mogila, and another in the direction of Arabadji and Akherkoi.

Thus Prince Nikolai's whole force was assembled at Eski Zagra and occupied a strong position facing Yeni Zagra, the Turks halting at Djuranli and making no further forward movement.

Meanwhile Colonel Krasnov with the squadron of the 26th Cossacks left at Eski Zagra made a reconnaissance along the road from Muratli to the south and found that in that direction there were some ten battalions, ten squadrons, and two batteries of artillery. Thus our force at Eski Zagra was in face of two bodies of the enemy, one to the south near Arabadji, and one to the east near Djuranli; and must accordingly show front in two directions. As in the course of the day no communication had been received from General Gurko, and there were the most gloomy rumours current as to the fate of his two columns. The inhabitants of the town and the

Bulgarian refugees were asking in terror what they were to do. With heavy hearts we had to advise them to flee, and accordingly they left the place in thousands, making for Kazanlik.

Late in the evening news came from Gurko of the capture of Yeni Zagra, and the expression of the confident hope that the next day, the 19th, he would effect a junction with us. The men, reassured by the news, lay down where they stood and as they were, worn out by the heat, the excitement, and the varying emotions of the day.

In comparing the position of the two contending parties that evening, we see that both one of our own and one of the Turkish forces was between two fires, in the latter case Reüf Pasha's and in the former Prince Nikolai's. The former with his twelve battalions had in front of him the Grand Duke's force of four battalions and fifteen squadrons, and in his rear that of General Gurko with five battalions and three and a half squadrons, and four and a half battalions not far behind. Prince Nikolai, on the other hand, had in front of him Reüf's force, and in his rear Suleiman with his whole army. He was in greater danger than any one else, as Reüf was close to him, and Suleiman only eight miles off on the

Syiutly Déré. Gurko, who was the only man who could come to his rescue, was at Karabunar, twelve miles from Eski Zagra. Thus all the chances of success were in favour of the Turks in the operations of the coming day.

CHAPTER VII.

ENGAGEMENT AT DJURANLI.

Position of Reüf Pasha—The 1st brigade, 9th division comes into action—The 4th Rifle Brigade comes up—Our cavalry comes up from before Eski Zagra—Attack on the wood of Giuranli—Pursuit—Advance of General Gurko on Eski Zagra.

WE have already seen that General Gurko, after the taking of Yeni Zagra, left the 4th brigade of Rifles there, and himself at 3 p.m. advanced with the 1st brigade of the 9th division along the high-road to Eski Zagra, as far as Karabunar, which was deserted, and there received information that the enemy had retreated on Djuranli, and our troops had marched to Eski Zagra. The brigade was halted for the night of the 18th July near Karabunar.

That evening Gurko issued in camp the following orders :—"The Rifle Brigade to leave the village of Evliany at 4 a.m, the 1st brigade to start from

Karabunar at 6 a.m., both moving on Eski Zagra.”¹ Colonel Kurnakov was sent on in advance with four squadrons of Cossacks and two H.A. guns. They were followed by the 1st and 2nd battalions and 3rd rifle company of the Siev regiment, with the 4th battery, and these in their turn by the Elets regiment with the 6th battery. General Gurko informed the leader of the right column, Prince Nikolai Maximilianovich, of his intention of marching to Eski Zagra. At 7 a.m., the earliest stage of the movement, he received a report from Colonel Kurnakov that the enemy were still at Giuranli and he was already exchanging shots with them.

The position of the Turks was very strong. They occupied the outskirts of a large and dense wood, which they had strengthened by digging rifle pits for their skirmishers, and shelter trenches for the supports. Their left flank was somewhat weaker because there the wood was much less dense, but to make up for it the entrenchments were much stronger. In the course of the night of the 18th July they threw up a lunette on the eastern verge of the wood, and lookouts were established in many of the trees.

¹ It is about five miles from Evliany and Karabunar where the two brigades were to join hands.

What more particularly constituted the strength of their position was that in many places it was masked by fields of maize, in which their sharpshooters lay hid and fired on our men almost point blank. To the left there was brushwood in places and some broken ground, but on the right the ground was almost completely smooth. This position was held, according to Gurko's estimate, by from nine to twelve battalions, eight to twelve guns, all on the left, while on the extreme left were large bodies of Circassians.¹

Let us now see what the enemy were doing. We know already that Suleiman Pasha began his advance on Eski Zagra in three columns. On the 19th July his centre column, which had marched from Karabunar and was under his personal command, was already making preparations to attack Eski Zagra. To the westward his troops were coming up from Chirpan and Philippopolis. At 8 a.m. the sound of cannon was distinctly heard from behind a wood in the direction of the road from Eski to Yeni Zagra, and the Turkish centre column actually saw powder smoke among the trees, and it was concluded

¹ There were, in fact, twelve battalions, some eight guns, a squadron of cavalry, and some 3000 Circassians.

that Reüf Pasha was engaged with the Russians to the north-eastward of that column.

Such being the case, it was open to Suleiman either to place himself with the bulk of his column on the right flank of the Russian force which was engaged with Reüf, detaching a small part of it towards Eski Zagra to prevent the dispatch of reinforcements from thence, or else attack that place with the bulk of his force, sending one brigade to the assistance of Reüf.

The latter course was that which he was forced to adopt, because according to the reports of his scouts Reüf Pasha had been engaged with the Russians at Giuranli for two days, and was probably opposed to superior forces. Such was the Turkish view of the state of affairs at that time, though in reality Reüf had that day at Giuranli twelve battalions as against our nine and a half, while the day before he was opposed only by the thirteen squadrons and six H.A. guns of Prince Eugene of Leuchtenberg, which were not supported till the end of the engagement, and then only by a single company of the Bulgarian Legion. Suleiman sent Reüf no reinforcements, in spite of the instances of Redjeb Pasha, but drew up a whole brigade in echelon on his right in order to

guard against an attack of the enemy, proceeding himself with the remainder of his force to deliver the attack on Eski Zagra. It is indeed possible that he expressly sent no reinforcements to Reüf, because if things went well Reüf would as the senior officer according to Turkish precedent re-assume the chief command of the troops in the Balkans.

Subsequently at the court-martial Suleiman justified himself by declaring that he did not know in what part of the wood Reüf was engaged, and that he thought the cannon-shots heard by him were simply a ruse on the part of the Russians to draw him away from Eski Zagra. Thus the forces of Suleiman and Reüf were not in touch with one another, though they were only some six miles apart, Suleiman being at Arabadjioi, and Reüf at Giuranli. This explains Reüf's audacity, which led to his defeat; and there is another fact which must not be forgotten, the relations existing between the two Turkish generals. Suleiman openly accused Reüf of trying to operate independently, so as not to be under his orders; while Reüf would naturally feel aggrieved at Suleiman's being appointed Commander-in-Chief. That they were bad friends is clear from the court-martial held on Suleiman.

As for Suleiman's assertion that he did not know that it was just beyond the wood that Reüf was engaged, it is refuted by the fact that on the 19th July, at 4.30 a.m., when he began his advance to Eski Zagra, he sent his aide-de-camp to Reüf with orders to put himself in motion and join his column. This order did not reach Reüf, because the aide-de-camp, having come across bodies of the Russian cavalry between Eski and Yeni Zagra, turned back without delivering the order. However it may be, the fact remains that Reüf was not supported by Suleiman, and his force had to contend single-handed with that under General Gurko. During the night of the 18th July, Reüf sent for the regimental commanders and ordered them to prepare as quickly as possible for an advance. Probably the cause of this haste was the news that General Gurko's column had reached Karabunar. But the Turks as usual did not hurry themselves, and were still in the Djuranli wood when next morning the Cossacks came in sight in the direction of Karabunar.

As we already know, at 7 a.m. on the 19th General Gurko received a report from Colonel Kurnakov that the enemy was still near Djuranli, and that the Cossacks had already exchanged shots with him.

Thus Reüf, instead of retreating, found himself engaged with Gurko's column. Riding round the head of the column, Gurko saw that the enemy was in small force on the outskirts of the great wood which surrounds Giuranli, and was beginning to deploy. Knowing nothing of the movements of Suleiman's force and hoping to catch the enemy between two fires, he ordered all the troops advancing from Yeni Zagra to wheel to the left, and endeavour to turn the right flank of the enemy so as to cut off his retreat. In doing so he reckoned that the Eski Zagra force, hearing firing to the east, would deliver an attack on the other side, from the west. Consequently the regiments of the 1st brigade of the 9th infantry division, numbering five battalions and one company, wheeled to the left of the main road and deployed one and a half miles to the south of it. The companies of the 2nd battalion of the Siev regiment which headed the column, formed two lines of company columns, with the 2nd and 3rd rifle companies as skirmishers. Soon the 1st battalion of the Eleks regiment and the 4th battery were sent to the assistance of the 2nd battalion. At this time the force was drawn up in the following order: in the centre, 1000 yards from the edge of the wood, the

4th battery, 9th brigade, supported by the 6th and 3rd rifle company of the Siever regiment, to its left the 2nd rifle and 7th companies of the same, and behind them the 1st battalion Eleks regiment in companies in two lines. To the right stood the 5th company of the Siev regiment, succeeded by the 1st battalion of the same, having half the 1st rifle company in skirmish line, then the 2nd and 3rd battalions of the Eleks regiment, two companies of Cossack infantry, and on the extreme right more Cossacks with a section of the 15th Don Battery, unlimbered on the road. The 6th battery was for the present held in reserve with the 8th company of the Siev. In this order the troops advanced over fields covered with brushwood, tall corn and maize, which greatly hindered their movement, as it was very difficult to search out the enemy. An accidental circumstance showed his whereabouts, not more than 500 paces from our line of skirmishers. A hare leapt out from under a bush and ran all along the skirmishers of the 3rd rifle company, and at the loud cries of our soldiers the Turks peeped out in thick clusters from their cover, and betrayed themselves.

In the advance the 3rd rifle company got a good deal ahead, whereupon the Turks moved forward

against it. Some 200 or 300 of them rushed forward in a body, got round the leading half company, and took it in the rear. To extricate it the 4th and 5th companies went forward with a cheer and drove back the Turks. Meantime the 4th battery and the 6th company had reached a sunken road and took fresh ground there, 1000 yards from the edge of the Djuranli Wood. About the same time the 6th battery was called up, and took ground to the left of the 4th. The enemy's rifle fire grew hotter and hotter, and at last they came forward in dense masses to the attack, heading for the 4th battery. It and the infantry met the enemy with a heavy fire, but the Turks, in spite of great losses, almost reached the guns. Then a counter-stroke was delivered on our part by the 1st battalion and 5th company of the Siev regiment, supported by the 3rd battalion of the Elets, and the Turkish attack was driven back. Nevertheless the 4th battery retired, with its escort, as the Turks, though retiring, continued to rain bullets on them. At the same time on our left the 1st battalion of the Elets and the 7th and 3rd rifle companies of the Siev regiment under Colonel Vulfert began to turn the enemy's right. In spite of the broken nature of the ground and the fire of the Turkish

skirmishers, delivered at a very short distance, the force advanced gradually and entered the wood.

On our right also the Turks several times assumed the offensive, but were always driven back by the deadly fire of our riflemen. Noticing the increasing numbers of the enemy threatening our right flank, General Gurko sent an orderly to the advancing Rifle Brigade, ordering them to hasten to the scene of action, and to send forward at a trot the 15th Don Battery, to take ground on the right of our fighting line.

The 4th Rifle Brigade had left its bivouac near the village of Evliany at five in the morning and moved on Eski Zagra. At nine o'clock distant firing was heard, as also from the rear towards Yeni Zagra, which caused some hesitation till it was found to be due to our cavalry who had been sent there to destroy the Turkish ammunition. Debouching on the Eski Zagra high-road, the column moved faster, the stragglers caught up their regiments, and all took their proper posts. The men went along gaily, as if on a military promenade.

While the column was halted for a rest, an orderly from General Gurko came riding up with orders to move on faster, as General Boreisha's brigade was

already engaged with the enemy. The riflemen at once sprang up from their rest, and moved on at a quick step. The sound of guns grew louder and louder, individual shots becoming distinguishable. The columns of dust raised by the Rifles were noticed by the Turks, and their shells began to fly over the heads of our men. Soon another orderly rode up with instructions from Gurko to send all the artillery forward. Six Cossack guns (two of the 10th and four of the 15th battery) went forward at a sharp trot. Disregarding the enemy's fire, they advanced in dashing style, and at a distance of some 1200 yards opened such a hot fire on his artillery that at the fourth round the Turkish battery had to limber up and retire 600 yards. The Rifles reached the field about 11 a.m., having in six hours covered some 14 or 15 miles, and took post on the right of our line. Here on a hillock was General Gurko with his staff. Near this hillock was posted the 14th battalion, while the 13th, 15th, and two companies of the 16th took ground behind another, further to the right.

The Turks had also gradually brought into action almost all their disposable force, and soon after twelve took the offensive against our centre, while the 3000 Circassians made ready to fall on our right flank and

cut us off from the high-road. Two brigades, those of Nazif Bey and Mehemet Pasha, were put in motion against our centre. The terrible fire of their skirmishers, the volleys of the supporting bodies, and the weight of the advancing troops made our centre give back somewhat. As soon as the Turkish advance was noticed, the 6th battery, 9th brigade, and the 15th Cossack battery directed a heavy fire of shrapnel on the advancing columns, while the company of the Eleys regiment which was in reserve was thrown into the fighting line. At the same time General Gurko ordered General Tsvietsinski to attack the enemy's left flank with the Rifle Brigade. Consequently the original plan of attacking the enemy's right was abandoned. The 15th Rifles was the first to advance in two lines in company columns under Colonel Beklemishev. At first the 1st company, under Captain Skarkov, was thrown forward as skirmishers, and a little after the line was extended to the right by the second company, Captain Rachinski, the whole under Major Savich, with the third and fourth companies as supports. The 15th battalion was followed by the 13th, also in column of companies. On coming in a line with the skirmishers of the left column, the Rifle skirmishers

soon distanced them, and pushed forward under a murderous fire from the enemy, with a view to occupying the outskirts of the wood. In so doing they suffered considerable loss. Soon the supporting companies joined the skirmishers, and when there was found to be a gap between them and those of the Siev regiment, the second and third companies of the 13th Rifles were pushed forward to fill it, under Major Solianko, the temporary commandant. All these manœuvres checked the Turks' advance, and they began to concentrate round the outskirts of the wood. The Cossack batteries, moving from one position to another, inflicted severe loss on the Turks near the wood by their close fire. Meanwhile the Rifle Brigade continued to advance, and General Tsviet-sinski ordered the 15th to edge to the right, so as to turn the enemy's left flank. In so doing the battalion exposed its own left, and to cover it the first company of the 13th was pushed forward from the second line.

Thus men had been gradually pushed forward into first line, and two whole battalions, the 13th and 15th, took part in the attack on the wood, the 14th being held in reserve under the immediate orders of General Gurko.

Meanwhile a body of some 3000 Circassians had advanced to turn our right. But this movement was paralyzed by the coming up of our cavalry from Eski Zagra. As we know, the latter had after the affair of the 18th at Karabunar fallen back and camped at Aidenli, having thirteen squadrons and six guns. On the 19th, between six and seven in the morning, a body of cavalry was seen moving from Yeni Zagra, this being three and a half squadrons and two guns under Colonel Kurnakov, preceding General Boreisha's brigade. This little force wheeled to the south of the high-road, and bringing its guns into position against Djuranli, opened fire. Then Prince Nicolas of Leuchtenberg sent the Kiev Hussars and a section of No. 10 Don Battery to co-operate with the Cossacks. The commander of the regiment, Colonel Baron Korf, A.D.C., led the detachment in the direction of Djuranli, but soon encountered salvoes of artillery, and was forced to halt. Till ten o'clock the two Cossack guns held their ground against the enemy's artillery, and the Hussars threatened the left of the enemy's position. At that hour the Astrakhan regiment with a section of the 16th Horse Artillery battery was sent forward from Aidenli to the Muratli road to the assistance of our dismounted

Cossacks and a battalion of the Bulgarian Legion which had occupied a wood near that road close to the village of Kovigiakli (south of Eski Zagra), and were engaged with fifteen battalions advancing from the south.

At eight o'clock the advance of Suleiman's army from Arabadjikoi and along the Chirpan road was observed. All that the Dragoons and Horse Artillery could do was to manœuvre against the right flank of the Turks and keep up a constant fire on them, but this had the effect of checking their advance to some extent, and turning their right aside in a westerly direction.

At eleven o'clock the Kiev Hussars and the Dragoons returned to Aidenli. The former retreated because the regiment had had losses and the guns had expended their ammunition, the latter after beating off the charge of the Circassians, and on account of the heavy fire of the Turkish riflemen. Thus our cavalry was unable to keep in touch with the enemy, nor had it been able to open communication with Gurko's column, though the Cossacks that headed his advance were sighted by it.

At the time when Gurko was attacking the position at Djuranli and Suleiman that at Eski Zagra,

at Aidenli in the interval between the two positions there stood twelve squadrons (the Astrakhan, Kazan, and Kiev regiments) and the 16th Horse Battery. Although the Hussars had not attained their object, yet the advance of this body of cavalry on the left of the Turks at Giuranli, simultaneously with that of the Astrakhan Dragoons on Suleiman's right, prevented any Turkish detachment from making its way through the gap between the two Turkish columns, which were thus wholly cut off from one another. The same object was kept in view by the two regiments named and the Horse Battery even even after the retirement to Aidenli. Posting themselves on the hills behind the *Yeni Zagra chaussée*, on the left of the position held by the Bulgarians in the environs of Eski Zagra, they kept guard over the gap that separated Reüf from Suleiman Pasha's force. But the resolute advance of the Turks on Eski Zagra forced Prince Nicolas to detach the Kazan regiment and send it to the assistance of the Bulgarian Legion which was covering Eski.

At 12.30 p.m. General Rauch arrived on the scene of action at Aidenli, and taking command of the whole force at Eski Zagra, at once sent the Kiev Hussars and Astrakhan Dragoons with the 16th

Horse Battery to reinforce General Gurko, who was sadly in want of cavalry. The guidance of this column, which was under the orders of Colonel Baron Korf, was entrusted to Lieut.-Colonel Sukhotin, of the General Staff. The movement was a very difficult one, the high-road along which it was made being exposed to a heavy fire from the enemy's infantry, which held the thickets and the wood near Djuranli, and were flanked on their left by some 3000 Circassians. However, it was facilitated by the fact that the attention of the Turks was at that time drawn to their right and centre, which were hotly engaged with General Gurko's force.

Sending out strong covering parties to the south, the cavalry advanced in column at a trot along the high-road to Yeni Zagra, being within range of the artillery and rifle fire of the enemy in Giuranli. When it had covered about one-third of a mile, shells and bullets were showered on it, and from then till it joined General Gurko it was under a heavy flanking fire from the enemy all the way. In spite of this it continued to move smartly forward, but as it neared the left of the Turkish position at Djuranli it was attacked in flank by the Circassians; then our guns opened on them with case, and the leading two squadrons of the

Dragoons charged. The Circassians did not await the shock, but made off to the nearest cover, from which they opened fire, and our cavalry continued its advance past the Turkish left, under a fire which kept increasing in fury. During this movement one of the guns had a horse killed, the gun was unable to move, and while the damage was being repaired, the Circassians again advanced and surrounded our cavalry.

The Horse Battery opened with case upon them, as they were at close range, and the Hussars and Dragoons, partly with the sword and partly with fire from the saddle, opened a way through them. The Circassians were driven back at all points from the high road, and our cavalry rode on towards the left of Gurko's force. But in a few minutes the Circassians came on again on all sides, and followed our regiments resolutely, firing as they advanced. The Dragoons halted from time to time, and fired at them from horseback, but it was not much use. At last two H.A. guns wheeled quickly round, unlimbered, and fired. Then the Circassians turned tail, and the Dragoons and Hussars pursued them for some distance, after which they were no longer hindered in joining General Gurko.



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On their arrival, Lieut.-Colonel Oreüs' battery moved forward and opened a telling fire on the enemy's left. The arrival of this reinforcement was a great relief to Gurko, for he had been hotly engaged with Reüf's twelve battalions since the morning. Its arrival was simultaneous with the attack of the Rifle Brigade and that of Colonel Vulfert, who by this time had completely turned the enemy's right.

We have already seen how the Rifles attacked the wood in such a way as to turn the left of the Turks. The struggle for the slope was not long, but it was bitter. Our men came across entrenchments from which the Turks rained volleys on them. But the Rifles, undismayed, charged with the bayonet and drove the Turks from the first line of entrenchments. This materially affected matters at Djuranli, for the Turks thereupon turned and fled. The fighting gradually slackened everywhere, and by three o'clock ceased entirely.

Thus the fight had taken a decided turn in our favour. The failure of the attack on our centre, the turning of their right flank, the attacks of the Rifles and the cavalry, and lastly the coming up of more cavalry and horse artillery caused the enemy to

begin retreating at all points. Reüf, seeing that the game was up, told off three battalions of Nazif Bey's brigade to cover the retreat; the remainder began to fall back, at first in good order, towards the south-east, but soon a panic set in and the Turks began to run to all points of the compass, no special direction having been given with regard to their retreat. Reüf himself with the remnants of his force made his way to the station at Karabunar. Observing the Turks fall back, our troops at once proceeded to take the offensive with vigour.

It was now about 2 p.m. As soon as Gurko saw the retreat of the Turks, he sent orders for the whole of the Rifle Brigade to re-form on the high road with the 1st brigade of the 9th division to the left rear. The Astrakhan Dragoons and a wing of the Hussars were told off to cover the right against Suleiman, who by this time had gained a decisive success at Eski Zagra. Only a wing of the Hussars and three and a half squadrons of Cossacks with four H.A. guns were sent in pursuit of the enemy.

This is explained by what we are now going to relate. At the beginning of the engagement, as we know, Gurko, having no news from Eski Zagra and

not having heard that Suleiman's army was advancing, kept expecting every minute that the Eski Zagra force would take the position at Djuranli in rear. But about ten o'clock, finding that force did not come in sight, he began to surmise that it had itself been attacked. This of course meant that Suleiman had taken the offensive. This made it imperative in his eyes to beat his opponents at Djuranli at all costs and go to the aid of the Eski Zagra force. Nor was it less imperative that that force should hold out to the last, as otherwise Suleiman would be free to turn on Gurko's with all his strength.

He, therefore, sent orders to the troops at Eski Zagra to hold out to the last, saying at the same time that as soon as he had dispersed the enemy at Djuranli he would come to their aid. When about 2 p.m. he saw the enemy falling back, he gave the orders above mentioned with a view to attacking Eski Zagra that very day, if it had been occupied by the Turks, or else relieving the Bulgarians if that were still possible.

While the troops were assembling, he set off for Eski Zagra with the 14th Rifles, the cavalry, and the 16th Horse Battery. The Hussars led the way, and

their patrols reported that the town was occupied by the enemy's infantry to the number of about a regiment and a large body of Circassians. About 4 p.m. they halted some three miles from the town and waited till six for the rest of the force to come up. About that hour the Rifle Brigade came up, and about 6.30 General Boreisha's brigade.

Our losses in the fight near Djuranli amounted to twenty officers and 498 rank and file (killed, ninety-seven; wounded, 401). Let us now proceed to describe the fight before Eski Zagra.

CHAPTER VIII.

Fight near Eski Zagra—Our position—Advance of the Turks—Counter-strokes by the 3rd and 4th Bulgarians—Retreat from Eski Zagra—That town occupied by the Turks—Arrival of General Gurko at Eski Zagra and retreat to Dalboki.

WE have seen that the commander of the Eski Zagra force, in consequence of the evident intention of the Turks to advance from Karabunar station to Eski Zagra, resolved during the night of the 17th July to set out with all his infantry, the mountain artillery, a section of the 10th Cossack battery and a squadron of the Kiev Hussars, and effect a junction with the troops at Eski Zagra, leaving his cavalry, eleven squadrons, and two of Cossacks, and six H.A. guns at Dalboki.¹

In the evening of the 18th, news was received at Eski Zagra from General Gurko that he had taken Yeni Zagra, and intended to start at dawn the next day to effect a junction with the Eski force. All were delighted at the receipt of this news.

¹ i.e. the Astrakhan and Kazan regiments, three squadrons of the Kiev ditto, two of Cossacks, and the 16th Horse Battery.

Duke Nicolas ordered Colonel de Preradovich to once more take up the post of commandant of Eski, and see to the reassuring of the inhabitants and the restoration of order, which had been disturbed by the news of the Turkish advance from the south. Hereupon the Colonel sent for a company of the 2nd Bulgarian battalion, half of which was told off to patrol the streets, while the other was posted on the Chirpan road to protect the town against a sudden attack from the Philippopolis side. Then he summoned the Town Council and informed them, and through them the inhabitants, that all danger was over, that Yeni Zagra had been occupied by General Gurko, and that a strong force under his orders was advancing to the relief of the town.

On the 19th, at nine in the morning, troops were seen in motion to the south of the town. The advance guard of the Eski Zagra force, consisting of one Bulgarian battalion and the dismounted Cossacks, entered on an unequal fight with fifteen battalions of the enemy near the village of Kovigiakli (to the south of Eski). To reinforce these, as we have seen, the Astrakhan regiment and two H.A. guns were sent from Aidenli. These, advancing on the Turkish right flank, and firing hotly on them,

checked them for a time. But the enemy's numerical superiority forced our weak advance guard at about eleven o'clock to retreat to the southern outskirts of the town, where the other Bulgarians were posted, the Astrakhan Dragoons at the same time falling back to Aidenli.

Gradually it became evident that the Turks were advancing in force. Then suddenly the whole rolling mass seemed to halt: the hillocks near them were occupied by bodies of men, amongst whom individual riders could be distinguished, and at last a puff of smoke rose from the nearest hillock and the first shell took its flight into the eastern portion of the town.

Meantime General Stolietov had ordered his troops to take up a position close to Eski. It was at the southern extremity of the town. Its right rested on the Chirpan road; in front of it was a low rampart, stretching along the limit of the town, while the left extended to the road to Karabunar station. The ground in front was level, but covered in parts with small vineyards, maize, and single fruit-trees. Behind it lay the town, built of wood, with tortuous and narrow streets. There was one line of retreat, viz. to Kazanlik, starting from the left of the position.

Close to this flank was a wood. The left was thus the key of the position, yet the enemy could approach it under cover. On the other hand the road from Yeni Zagra by which General Gurko was expected terminated there.

Behind the road which winds round the south of the town and connects the roads from Chirpan and Eski Zagra a low rampart had been built, between the town and the dense vineyards. Here, almost on the extreme right of the position, was posted the 2nd Bulgarian battalion under Lieut.-Colonel Kurtianov and two mountain guns: the battalion threw forward a strong body of skirmishers into the vineyards. On the Chirpan road stood the 3rd company of the same battalion, with a gap between it and the main body. Colonel de Preradovich was given the command of the right, and charged with the defence of the town. This arrangement was made by General Stolietov after the fight began. "The Turks are attacking the south of the town," he wrote to the Colonel. "Besides the 2nd and 5th battalions (Bulgarians) and two mountain guns, two more guns and the Kazan Dragoons are placed at your disposal."

As there was no infantry available, de Preradovich

proposed to fill the gap above mentioned with dismounted Dragoons, but the Kazan regiment, by whose orders is not known, had gone off along the Kazanlik road at a rapid pace. Twice he sent after the commander of the regiment, but to no purpose, and it was only at the third and more emphatic summons, sent in the name of Prince Nicolas, that he came and expressed "his wonder how cavalry could defend the town." The commandant then pointed out the gap, and proposed to fill it with dismounted Dragoons, which was accordingly done by a portion of the Kazan regiment under Colonel Bielogrudov. To the left of the 2nd Bulgarians were posted two squadrons of dismounted Cossacks and the 5th Bulgarians, having on their left two mountain guns. To their left again were the 1st and 3rd Bulgarians and the two guns of the 10th Don Battery. The Astrakhan Dragoons and Kiev Hussars with Oreüs' Horse Battery were further left at Aidenli. The line of defence extended four miles and was too long for such a weak force, not more than 3500 men in all.

Let us now see what the enemy were doing. On the morning of the 17th July Suleiman's army set itself in motion towards Eski Zagra in three columns, one of which under his personal command only made

eight or nine miles that day. On the 18th he encountered half-way between Eski and Arabdjikoi a squadron of the 26th Cossacks, brushed it aside, and continued his march to Eski. His advance guard halted for the night a little beyond Arabdjikoi, where it formed in order of battle and spent all night under arms. The main body encamped on the Syutli (Déré) river.

On the 19th, at 4.30 a.m., he started from this camp for Eski Zagra. At the same time he sent his aide-de-camp to Reüf with orders to put himself in motion and effect a junction with him. The aide-de-camp took the Yeni Zagra road, came upon our troops, and at seven returned to Suleiman with the intelligence that a considerable body of Russian cavalry was moving from Yeni to Eski Zagra. These were the three and a half sotnias under Colonel Kurnakov. The intelligence had no effect on Suleiman, nor did he take any measures to protect his own right or establish communication with Reüf. As he had received information the evening before from two Circassians of the taking of Yeni by the Russians, he took it for granted that Reüf, retiring on Radino, would be able subsequently to rejoin him from the rear, and

as he had at the same time learnt the approach of Khulussi Pasha's column from Chirpan, he considered that he and Reüf were strong enough to venture an attack on Eski Zagra.

"We found ourselves," says an eye-witness,¹ "on ground covered with wood; before us stretched a range of mountains, and we could see the town of Eski at the foot of them. To the westward battalions were coming up from Philippopolis and Chirpan. It was a still and sultry day. At 8 a.m. the sound of artillery distinctly reached us from beyond the wood, in the direction of the road from Yeni to Eski Zagra; we could even see the smoke between the trees, and made up our minds that it was Reüf Pasha engaged with the Russians five miles off, in a north-easterly direction. Here again no steps were taken to reconnoitre in the direction of the shots heard or to ascertain what was really happening at Djuranli." Suleiman had determined not to support Reüf, but with the whole of his own and Khulussi Pasha's columns, 25,000 to 30,000 men, to fall on the Eski Zagra force.

Accordingly he continued his advance on Eski. His advance guard came in contact with ours south

¹ Colonel Cookson.

of that place, at Kovigiakli, and the latter retired on the town. About 300 regular cavalry and the Circassians were pushed forward to screen his army; they encountered our outposts, which retired. Then the infantry and artillery moved up behind their cavalry, and soon saw that the Bulgarian Legion was posted behind the town rampart, while the Russians held the rising ground on the left. The Turkish order of battle was as follows: on the right of the first line the 2nd brigade, on the left the 3rd, and the 4th in the centre; the 5th brigade was in reserve and the 1st formed the baggage guard. When the fight began Khulussi Pasha's column had not yet reached the field. Of the three brigades selected to attack our position the central one was to attack our centre, while the 2nd and 3rd were to act on our flanks. Their objective was the heights north of Eski Zagra and the possession of the Kazanlik road.

The Turkish artillery opened fire and was answered by ours. The Turks believed that we had two field guns on our left, and a mountain battery posted in sections of two guns each along the heights behind the town. Suleiman Pasha was with the battery which was shelling the road to Eski Zagra. The

Turkish infantry advanced in close column, but at the moment of coming to the charge a shell burst in the midst of one of their columns. The rear ranks wavered, but recovered heart and pressed forward with cries of "Allah, Allah!" The centre of our position was the first to be attacked, then the left and right respectively, the left being hardest pressed as Suleiman reinforced the 2nd brigade with some battalions of the 5th and afterwards of the 4th.

Our line was such a long one that if you were on the right you might have thought the Turks were attacking the left and the centre, to judge only by the ceaseless firing. The officer in charge of the defence at that point, Colonel de Preradovich, had simply no intelligence of what was happening to his left during the whole course of the fight, yet vital issues were all the while being decided on the left and in the centre. There the Turks viciously attacked the 1st and 3rd Bulgarians, who steadfastly repulsed their onslaughts. The 1st and 2nd companies of the latter corps were in the fighting line, the other two acting as support to the skirmishers, but as the Turks sent forward increasing swarms of skirmishers and a column advanced against its right, the 1st and 2nd companies were moved further to

the right, and thus the whole battalion was in the firing line without any supports. The skirmishers of both sides long stood firing hotly at each other. Such a state of things became intolerable, and it became imperative to abandon the defensive and drive back the enemy.

The commander of the 3rd Bulgarians accordingly ordered the drummer to beat the charge, and the whole line advanced, the 3rd company striking up the song, "Bolgari yunatsy" ("the Bulgarians are brave fellows"). When the battalion was 300 paces from the enemy a hearty cheer rang out, and the charge was pushed home so forcibly that the enemy fled in complete disorder. The Bulgarians still pushed on, thus exposing both their flanks, and the Turks advanced in dense columns to attack them in flank. Hereupon the right of the 3rd battalion changed front, while the 1st moved forward to attack the enemy threatening its left. Colonel Count Tolstoi ordered the bugler to sound the advance, and with the battalion commander led the 1st forward in support of the 3rd. The astonished enemy halted, but soon resumed his advance, and pressed hard upon the daring survivors. His fire grew hotter and hotter, and at last made it impossible for the Bulgarians to

stand their ground : a hail of lead was poured on them, and many of their Chassepôts became foul and useless. Our losses were serious and our fire was slackening, and the Turks kept advancing in spite of the deadly fire of Captain Konstantinov's guns, which enfiladed their skirmishers.

At this juncture Lieut.-Colonel Kalitin gave orders to retire. The ensign of the 3rd fell, and Kalitin grasped the colour, but fell from his horse with a bullet in his head. The flag was passed from hand to hand, five men falling with it, but it was rescued with its staff broken and lance-head bent by a sergeant of the 2nd company.

The fight went on furiously, the losses kept growing, men and officers falling fast. Many deeds of self-sacrifice and daring were done by the heroes of the day. When Captain Fedorov fell wounded, Lieutenant Jinarev ran to him, and, though wounded in doing so, tried to carry him and then Colonel Kalitin out of the fire, but the task was beyond his strength. His devotion was nearly being fatal to him, he had to leave his stricken comrades, and was almost the last to gain the defile.

About midday rifle fire was opened on our centre and right, and the two guns under Captain

Konstantinov fired shrapnel under a hail of bullets. The 5th Bulgarians also came under fire, then the skirmishers of the 2nd were engaged, and the fight gradually spread along the whole line. About this time parties of Turkish cavalry began to get round our right flank, and the situation became critical. In order to check the turning movement de Preradovich sent two mountain guns and a half troop of Dragoons to the Kazanlik road to open fire on the enemy's cavalry. Almost at the same moment an orderly rode up with orders to hold out at all costs, as General Gurko was expected every minute. But it was also becoming plainer every minute that the game was up and that our handful of men could not possibly stand their ground any longer. The brisk fusillade from the centre and left had slackened, the sound of our guns grew less frequent, the town was on fire in parts, and from the rear ominous sounds of firing could be distinguished. Our centre and right were forced to fall back. At about two o'clock the town was abandoned: the 1st and 3rd Bulgarians still disputed the valley, and between them and the town were two squadrons of the Kazans, dismounted. Two Cossack guns, escorted by a troop of the 26th Cossacks, still stood fast on the extreme left.

The Turks, seeing our retreat, began to press forward in thick swarms, so that the 2nd Bulgarians, which had had no losses in the fight itself, lost thirty-seven killed and wounded. As the line of retreat ran from the left of the position, the troops of the right and centre had when abandoning the town to make their way through the vineyards and reach the Kazanlik valley higher up the river. Not far from the town a small country seat lay on the river, to which some of the enemy's riflemen and armed peasants had found their way, and from it they rained bullets on our men. No one in the retreating force knew the right path through the vineyards, till a Bulgarian they met showed them in what direction to make for the gorge, where the scattered force rallied. At the entrance were General Rauch and Colonel Freze, of the Staff, from whom they learned that General Gurko had not arrived, and Stolietov was no one knew where. The Chief of the Staff of the Legion, Lieut.-Colonel Rynkevich, who had been by Stolietov's side almost all the time, presently came up, but was no wiser as to his whereabouts.¹

So for the time the command of the Legion devolved on de Preradovich. General Rauch was for

¹ He had with difficulty escaped the Circassians.

choosing a suitable position in the valley, to rally his scattered forces and show front to the enemy, but the plan had to be abandoned and the retreat continued to the valley of the Tundja. Here at length, after crossing the river, a position was taken up and order established amongst the remnants of the force. Prince Nicolas had the Bulgarians paraded and thanked them warmly for their gallant conduct in the action, telling them that "they were in no way inferior to old soldiers," which speech was translated to them. Night fell, the stars shone brightly in the dark sky, and in the distance a faint glare could be seen above Eski Zagra. The thoughts of our poor scattered men were gloomy enough. The hapless lot of those who had doubtless perished by hundreds and thousands under the blows of the infuriated Turks weighed on their minds. And indeed of the 18,000 inhabitants of the town comparatively few escaped a terrible fate.

The attack had been most furious on our centre. According to an eye-witness, the shrapnel fire of our mountain battery wrought terrible havoc among the Turks, and forced them also to push forward a mountain battery. They forced their way into the town about 1 p.m.; but the streets were still hotly contested

up to 5 p.m. Such of the inhabitants, the Legion, and our own men as had not shared in the retreat shut themselves up in the municipal buildings and the church and held out till the following day. The town was set on fire in several places. On capturing it Suleiman sent off a lengthy telegram to Constantinople, in which he concealed two leading facts, and only gave prominence to his having, after a desperate struggle, driven back the whole of the enemy's forces. The engagement was magnified into a great victory, and greatly raised Suleiman's repute in the eyes of the government. Although the Turkish General ordered his men to extinguish the fire, the Circassians and Bashi-Bazouks, for the sake of plunder, set fire to the houses, and the conflagration lasted several days, and destroyed three-fourths of the town. Somewhat later than 5 p.m., when our troops were already retreating along the Kazanlik road, Suleiman sent in pursuit of them one brigade, the 3rd, which had only got as far as Derbentkoi. At about the same time Khulussi Pasha's column reached Eski Zagra.

In this encounter Suleiman had employed about half his force, i.e. from 12,000 to 15,000 men. When it was nearly concluded, a messenger came to

him from Reüf asking for support, his troops being engaged in the wood at Djuranli. Suleiman sent orders to Khulussi's brigade to march in the direction indicated to Reüf's support. But the order was not carried out, for Reüf's messenger vanished and Khulussi did not know where to go. According to their own account, the Turkish loss in this affair was about 1000; ours amounted to twenty-three officers (out of a total of fifty-five) and 512 rank and file of the Bulgarian Legion. One battalion had five officers wounded and four killed out of thirteen, and lost more than 200 rank and file. The taking of Eski Zagra by the Turks was marked by a series of terrible atrocities upon the inhabitants.

At the very beginning of the fight the male population of the town had armed themselves as best they could, for the most part with pikes, and guarded all the exits from the town, some of the streets being barricaded with *arabas*. Women were mingled with the men, many of them with children in their arms. Everything went to show that the people believed in a possibility of victory, and in our promises, and were convinced that we should fall to the last man before giving up the town.

What terror there was among them when the day was lost, when ruin was inevitable! All hastened to fly. Crowds of women with children ran after the soldiers, catching at their stirrups and imploring them at least to save their children, if not them. Most of them, however, fled with a look of unreasoning terror on their haggard faces, abandoning the old people and children, and thinking only of saving themselves from the merciless enemy, and from a death of torture. Women with child gave birth on the very road and continued their flight, abandoning their new-born children. Our kind-hearted soldiers entrusted to the care of the abbot of the Kazanlik monastery several such infants picked up on the road. And the town burned more and more fiercely, the whistling bullets flew in all directions among the wretched, helpless crowd. It was a heart-rending spectacle, that narrow mountain road, literally choked with fleeing townsmen. The confusion was indescribable: here a mother running for her life and throwing away the child at her breast, there a feeble old man falling exhausted on the ground to await his fate, a frenzied old woman flinging her arms about and conjuring them to give her back her only son, there again children fleeing in search of

parents that perhaps they would never see again ; all mingled in one sobbing crowd, interspersed with the soldiers, and running in dumb despair. The soldiers tried to help these unfortunates as much as possible, carrying the smaller children in their arms, assisting the women and old men in their headlong flight, and encouraging the able-bodied men.

On the 20th July, at four in the afternoon, the force reached Kazanlik, and effected a junction with the 4th and 6th Bulgarians. That same evening the 3rd battalion was sent by Shipka to Gabrovo to escort the convoy of wounded. The remainder soon received orders also to fall back to the Shipka heights, where all of them except the 6th arrived on the 29th. On the 21st General Rauch heard from Gurko that he had routed the Turks at Djuranli on the 19th. Receiving no orders from him where to go, Rauch determined to march to Shipka. He did so under the conviction that the retention of that point was of the greatest importance and was held by a very small force. Thus part of the Advance Guard had been forced to retreat after the encounter at Eski Zagra, and lost all communication with the other part.

In estimating the results of the operations round

Eski Zagra, Major Gartner declares that the action was in any case a success for the Turks, although the military consequences were less remarkable than the savage cruelties exercised by them on gaining possession of the town. They had beaten a portion of Gurko's force, but only a small one. The number of men employed by them was out of all proportion to the task set before them, which was little more than beating the air. What Suleiman should have made his object was to destroy Gurko's force, by cutting off its retreat to the Balkans. At Eski Zagra he was in an excellent position for doing so, and in spite of the rout of Reüf, he had ample means for the purpose. But the organization of the Turkish troops, their discipline, the absence of energy in their leaders, in a word, their *moral*, were such that despite all the bravery of the soldiers it was hardly possible to count on their accomplishing the tasks set them. Accordingly we find Suleiman's army, in spite of its cheaply-earned success, remaining inactive for several days at Eski Zagra, allowing Gurko to recross the Balkans unmolested, and filling up its time with the most revolting barbarities.

Let us now turn once more to the troops under General Gurko's personal command. We have seen

how, after seizing the wood of Djuranli, that commander set out for Eski Zagra with the 14th Rifles, the Kiev Hussars, Astrakhan Dragoons, and the 16th H.A. Battery. The remaining troops had orders not to pursue the enemy, but to rally on the main road and then follow him to Eski Zagra. The Hussars led the way, and their patrols reported that Eski was in the hands of the enemy's infantry to the number of about a regiment and a large body of Circassians. Then the battery was posted on some rising ground to the right of the road, with the 2nd company of the Rifles in support, and the remaining three companies pushed on to some high ground about half a mile further.

From this point there was a grand view over the valley of the Maritsa. To the north-west, at the foot of the Lesser Balkans, was picturesquely situated one of the finest towns in Turkey, Eski Zagra, nestling among gardens. It was on fire, and the foot-hills, over which the high-road ran, were held by the Turks, and it was evident that efforts were being made to fortify the position. Lower down among the gardens, at a very short distance from our vedettes, the Turks were making a new disposition of their troops under cover of several thick swarms

of skirmishers. Behind the town could be seen dense clouds of dust, apparently raised by bodies of troops moving out of the town.

The eyes of all were bent on the enemy, chiefly to ascertain his numerical strength. Two widely different conclusions were the result. Some thought the Turks were very strong, others that their force could not be large, or they would not have allowed us with impunity to move along the high road in column and take up a position, but would have assumed the offensive. On the other hand, the weakness of the troops actually at Gurko's disposal, the late arrival of the other regiments which had been led away by the pursuit, and the nearness of darkness, which would fall completely in about an hour, induced Gurko to refrain from decisive measures. It was not till about 6 p.m. that the 13th, 15th, and two companies of the 16th came up along the main road, and half an hour later the brigade of the 9th division. The Turks still remained inactive. Considering all the circumstances the General thought it imprudent to lead the troops into action, and gave orders to retire to Dalboki, with a view to commencing a retreat early the next morning.

Darkness was falling as the retirement began ;

the 14th Rifles formed the rear-guard. The darkness became complete, but the column moved on in silence, as if with a consciousness that it had not done its duty. The heavy losses in the affair at Djuranli, together with the necessity of retreating, had damped the spirits of the men. They were to halt for the night at the village of Dalboki. At first they turned off the high-road to the left, but that proved not to be the right way. The troops halted and waited. At last a fresh guide was found, they went back to the high-road, but here there was a fresh halt and a wait. The waggon train of the Rifle Brigade, escorted by two companies of the 16th, was coming along the road; there were many wounded in it, picked up by the way. Many tried to get out, with no fixed object.

At last the troops came out on a road leading into the hills. The ascent was steep and rocky, and only possible for pack animals. At last, after a weary march, the troops reached Dalboki about midnight and encamped.

Weary as they were, it was long before they found rest. Discussions, suggestions, judgments on what had just taken place flew from mouth to mouth. There was no gay chatter, faces were dark and

pensive. The excitement and discontent were increased when Surgeon Gesler, attached to the 4th brigade, came into camp and told of the terrible position of the wounded and their attendants in the field hospitals, left behind for the night at Djuranli without escort or sufficient surgical appliances. Their position was indeed most dangerous. It only needed a cry to be raised that the Circassians were coming for the wounded to lose their heads, and in spite of the entreaties of the surgeons, run away as fast as they could, without thinking where. Many, we cannot doubt, did not reach their own people. The surgeons also hastened to rejoin their own corps, and but few were left in the hospital. Amongst these the surgeon of the 14th Rifles, Brussian, unwilling to leave his patients to their fate, induced some Cossacks and Dragoons on their way back from scouting, to take up the wounded on their horses.

On arriving at Dalboki, Gurko gave orders to ascertain how many cartridges and rounds for the guns were left. It proved that the supply was so small that it would have been madness not only to attempt an attack, but to remain within reach of Suleiman's army. For instance, the 10th Cossack battery had only twenty-seven rounds per gun left,

including case, and the forces which faced the column were very large. Gurko estimated that at Djuranli the Turks had ten battalions, and in the valley of the Maritsa fifteen, from which he concluded that twenty-five battalions of Suleiman's, or nearly the whole Turkish force, had been set in motion against him. Such being the case, General Gurko resolved the very next day to retreat to the Khainkoi defile, by the pass through the Lesser Balkans which leads from Dalboki to Balabandji. Five squadrons were to be sent to make a demonstration against Eski Zagra. "If I had stayed where I was at first with my troops scattered about, there is no room to doubt that I should have been crushed in detail, and should have had to abandon to the enemy the exit from the defile," wrote he in his report to the Commander-in-Chief. Subsequently he wrote on the 31st July from Tirnova that he had been unable to continue his advance, for on the 19th he had only gained a partial tactical success, while the other and larger portion of Suleiman's army could by falling back take up a fresh position, and circumstances did not admit of his pursuing it. Having once convinced himself that the whole or greater part of that army was already concentrated, it appeared impossible for

him with his weak force to achieve any decisive results until he received reinforcements. "My part," he wrote, "became at this juncture a defensive instead of an offensive one."

By about 3 a.m. in the night of the 19th silence once more reigned in the camp at Dalboki : all slept soundly, except the Chief of the Staff, Colonel Naglovski, who was framing the plan for the retreat which was to begin at five o'clock next morning.

CHAPTER IX.

Retreat to the Khainkoi Pass—March through the Dalboki Pass
—Arrival at Khainkoi—The retreat continued—Reconstruction of the Advance Guard.

THE day had scarcely dawned when the retreat by the Dalboki defile to Khainkoi began. The march was headed by the cavalry, followed by the 1st and 2nd battalions of the Siev regiment, with the 4th battery, then the convoy of wounded, and last the Rifle Brigade. A rear-guard was left in the valley of the Maritsa to cover the retreat, which consisted of the Elets regiment, the Astrakan Dragoons, and a squadron of Cossacks. The cavalry, partly dismounted, manœuvred along the Eski Zagra road near Aidenli, with the Elets regiment and 6th battery in support. As they ascended the hills and looked back into the plains, all noticed to the south of Eski five great columns of the enemy in motion ; amongst the clouds of dust could plainly be seen the flash of bayonets. We followed these receding columns with our eyes

till the evening. It was evident, so we then thought, that our victories before Eski and Giuranli had led the enemy to retreat southwards.

What were the Turks in reality doing at this time ? In the evening of the 19th and morning of the 20th Suleiman received intelligence that the day before Reüf had had a bitter fight with the Russians on the outskirts of the wood at Djuranli, precisely in the quarter from which shots had been heard ; it was further reported to him that at dusk on the 19th a Russian force had appeared in front of the pickets on the road to Yeni, and having reconnoitred, disappeared again. In order to ascertain the position of the enemy, Suleiman ordered a reconnaissance. His own opinion was that the Russians had held their ground so obstinately at Eski Zagra, even risking being cut off from the road to Kazanlik, because they were every moment expecting reinforcements from Yeni, with the help of which they would have gained a brilliant victory. No sooner had he and his suite reached the left flank of what had been our position, where the Turks had already constructed some new trenches, when his scouts informed him that clouds of dust were visible towards Yeni Zagra. Field glasses were at once brought into play, which showed that

seven battalions of the Russian infantry, screened by cavalry, were moving in column along the main road and the fields round it. On coming fairly close to the Turkish position they halted, and the cavalry alone continued to advance. It was supposed by the Turks that the Russians had been able to see plainly the infantry in the trenches, the batteries with guns mounted in them, and the bodies of troops scattered about the mountain valley in which Eski lies and the surrounding heights, for it is not easy to hide an army of 30,000 men. In reality, as we know, our observations had led us to quite a contrary conclusion, viz. that the Turks were retreating southward in five great columns.

Suleiman at once sent out a body of cavalry against us, and our rear-guard slowly fell back, halting as late as the evening of the 20th on the south side of the Lesser Balkans. At that time the wearied Turkish troops had encamped for the night round the burning town of Eski, while the Turkish inhabitants were being hurriedly got out of the town, escorted by two battalions and making in a huge mass for Maritsa to the southward. It was these that we took for the Turkish columns in motion.

Having occupied Eski Zagra, Suleiman declared

that he would not leave that town until he learnt the whereabouts of Reüf. At length he received intelligence from Karabunar that Reüf had really been put to the rout near Djuranli on the day that Eski was taken. It thus became clear that the Russians were in sufficient force to scatter his twelve battalions, and were on his right, and he could not advance on Shipka while such large numbers of the enemy were still in his rear. Later on came a report from the commandant of Karabunar that the Russians were at Yeni, so Suleiman determined to march on that place.

In addition to this, Suleiman's three days' halt near Eski is accounted for by the fact that he could not make up his mind to leave only a small garrison there, whilst it was out of the question to leave a large one, as to take Yeni Zagra would, in his opinion, require the efforts of the whole of his army. To leave only a few battalions there would be to expose them to attack from the Russians at Kazanlik. Accordingly he suggested to the inhabitants of Eski that they should emigrate, and delayed his march on Yeni till that had been carried out. Thus the defeat of Reüf, which was largely owing to Suleiman's not supporting him, and, later, the want of proper intelli-

gence as to our strength, caused Suleiman to make the great détour to Yeni before moving on Shipka. Had Reüf been victorious he might have pursued Gurko's column, and Suleiman, after taking Eski Zagra, could have pursued the Russians in the direction of Shipka. It is possible that he might have gained possession of the Shipka Pass, as at that time our force there was very small, only eight companies of the Orlov Regiment and the Bulgarian Legion, with a few cavalry and artillery.

But things turned out differently, and Suleiman's attention was wholly distracted towards Yeni Zagra. On the very day of the battle at that place, Suleiman received two very important pieces of intelligence, one as to Reüf's defeat at Djuranli, and the other from Constantinople, that a Russian force of 20,000 men had occupied Yeni Zagra. As this intelligence led Suleiman to think his right was exposed, he determined to march eastward and take Yeni Zagra from us. So he left Eski on the 22nd, reached Dalboki next day, and on the next approached Yeni. As it was night when he got there, he posted his troops somewhat to the west of the town, and drew a cordon round the place, to keep the Circassians from breaking in and plundering. He found none

of our troops there, and next morning a strange misconception took place. A train came along the line from Karabunar, but turned back before it reached the town. It turned out subsequently that it carried a body of troops to take possession of the town, but seeing tents and baggage-waggons, the Turks thought Gurko's army was there and hurried back again. Suleiman remained before Yeni several days, afterwards declaring he did so because he expected supplies from Karabunar and reinforcements from Shumla. But, according to Colonel Cookson, the chief cause of Suleiman's inactivity was that both he and the Turkish Government insisted on thinking that the Russians were in great force, and expected every minute that they would again march on Adrianople. He felt convinced that if he moved his whole force across the Slivno Pass, he would infallibly find superior numbers of the enemy confronting him on the western side, while the Russian columns would at the same time cross by Shipka, and moving on Adrianople, which was undefended, create a panic at Constantinople and so put an end to the war. In consequence of these considerations he remained at Yeni Zagra, and it was not till the 29th July that he started by Khainkoi for Shipka. Thus Gurko's

force was enabled, without fear of pursuit, to complete its retreat unharassed.

As we have seen, this retreat began at dawn on the 20th July. The route chosen, that by the Dalboki Pass, was one of great difficulty, and none but the Russians could have surmounted such difficulties. The road was in bad repair and in places became a mere track, practicable only for pack animals, and we had to carry over it our cavalry, our supplies, and our convoy of wounded. The way had to be cleared of great blocks of stone, or levelled where the ascent was too steep. In spite of great efforts, but little was accomplished in this way. The transport of the wounded was particularly difficult, and that of the artillery and supplies not much less so. The wounded were conveyed in bullock carts, and it may be imagined what these poor wretches endured as they jolted over the stony road. At the very beginning of the march, in ascending a steep place, the field dispensary had to be burnt, and the supplies of instruments and entrenching tools, while an ammunition cart and two Turkish guns taken at Yeni Zagra had to be thrown into a ravine. The march proceeded very slowly. The Rifle Brigade had been ordered to start at 5 a.m., and the battalions

were all ready, but they could not move till 2 p.m., when all the carts with the wounded had made their way into the hills. This delay affected the *moral* of the men, because all felt that Suleiman's army might advance. And if that general had followed us up vigorously, as we were making our way into the Dalboki Pass, he could have forced us to fight under impossible conditions, and with a very slender supply of rifle and gun ammunition. This was recognized by Gurko himself, who, in the evening of the 19th July, wrote to the Commander-in-Chief that if Suleiman continued to advance, his force would scarcely be able to stand its ground at Khainkoi. Having stood ready in camp at Dalboki for nine hours, the troops at last moved on at 2 p.m.

That day the force made but little progress, only about three miles, and halted for the night at about seven. In spite of the slow rate of movement the troops were very tired, as was not unnatural after two days' fighting, the forced marches that had gone before, their low state of spirits, and the heavy work implied in dragging the convoys of wounded and the guns through mountainous country. "The passage of the Dalboki Pass," wrote General Gurko on the 31st July, "was very trying to the troops. The

Pass was far more difficult to traverse than those of Khainkoi or Shipka. I may safely say that since the force under my orders has succeeded in traversing it, no other will ever stop it. None but a Russian army could have so patiently and obediently surmounted the inconceivable obstacles it presented."

The Astrakhan Dragoons, a squadron of Cossacks, and the Elets Regiment, which covered the retreat, remained during that night, the 20th July, on the south side of the Lesser Balkans. Next day, the 21st, the march began about 10 a.m., and at 4.30 p.m. the troops, after a harassing march, encamped near the village of Balabandja. That day the whole of the cavalry, after emerging from the Dalboki defile, was pushed forward to Essekji to guard the road from Balabandja to Khainkoi on the Kazanlik side.

During that day's retreat Gurko received a despatch from the Headquarters Staff, sent off on the 19th. It informed him of the issue of the combat of the 18th before Plevna. "In case of a fresh failure," it said, "although it cannot be disguised that the retreat of our army will be exceedingly difficult, yet, taking into consideration that a premature retirement behind the Balkans might cause a general advance of the

Turkish armies from all quarters, the Grand Duke, while releasing you from all responsibility for whatever course you may decide on, leaves it to you to act entirely at your own discretion. If you have fallen back on the passes, your force will come under the orders of Lieut.-General Radetsky."

On the 22nd the force started at seven in the morning, and by noon had passed the Khainkoi defile, through which it had advanced three weeks before into the "Valley of Roses." That same day General Gurko reconnoitred the country round, intending, according to the Commander-in-Chief's wishes as given above, to fortify a position covering the exit from the Khainkoi Pass, and, by holding it, to secure for the army a safe passage through it to the south. His troops were that day disposed as follows :—the Rifle Brigade, the Brigade of the 9th Division, the 4th and 6th Field Batteries, three squadrons of the Kiev Hussars, the greater part of the Cossack Brigade, the 16th H.A. battery, the 15th Don Battery, and ten mountain guns at the exit from the Khainkoi Pass, the Rifles guarding the Southern end, the Line Brigade the Eastern. The Astrakhan regiment, a squadron of Hussars, and four guns of the 10th Cossack battery were posted at

Sofular (Suflary) to watch the valley of the Tundja and open up communications with the part of the force which had retired on Shipka. These latter troops were disposed thus: on the Shipka Pass, the Bulgarian Legion, the 5th Field Battery, and four mountain guns, and at the village of Shipka the Kazan regiment. Gurko now considered that for the present he was in a good position, as he commanded the whole valley of the Tundja and the issues from the Khainkoi defile. Certain it is that recent events had made such an impression on the Turks that they were very cautious in their dealings with his force.

As soon as the Seraskierat received the report from the commandant of Karabunar as to the occupation of Yeni Zagra by the Russians, it hastened to send Suleiman a reinforcement of sixteen battalions under Shakir Pasha. When he reached Yeni Zagra Suleiman estimated Gurko's strength at at least two divisions, and a staff-officer sent from there to reconnoitre reported that there were thirty-five Russian battalions at Khainkoi. In reality there were only ten and a half.

The men of Gurko's force reached Khainkoi hungry, without biscuit and without salt. Next day four

pounds of biscuit were served out, to last three days, and there was no lack of meat, but there was no salt, nor could any be got. The officers had no provisions of any kind left.

Scarcely had the troops reached their bivouacs when officers were called for to survey the ground, and working parties to entrench the position. The latter went out with rifles and accoutrements. At the same time steps were taken to keep in touch with the enemy. Two reconnaissances were sent out to ascertain the truth of the reports as to Suleiman having fallen back from Eski Zagra to the south, one of thirty trained scouts of the Kiev Hussars, and the other of thirty Cossacks of the 26th Don regiment. The first rode through the ruins of the burnt town, losing two men wounded, and ascertained that the Turks had really retreated and that only some Bashi-Bazouks were left behind. The other sighted, near the main road from Eski to Yeni Zagra, the enemy's bivouacs, and columns on the march from the former town to the latter. It was thus evident that the enemy was marching on Yeni Zagra.

RETREAT TO THE KHAINKOI RIDGE.

In accordance with the instructions of the Com-

mander-in-Chief, General Gurko proposed, after fortifying a position in front of the issue from the Khainkoi defile, to await there further supplies of ammunition and for the time to come when circumstances should allow the main body to resume its advance. But General Radetsky, under whose orders Gurko was placed, took a different view, and thought the position of a portion of the Advance Guard, with the narrow defile behind it, dangerous and isolated, and, being unable to support it, sent Gurko orders on the 20th July to retire to the head of the Pass. Gurko received this order on arriving at Khainkoi, but did not think it possible to carry it out implicitly, and addressed to General Radetsky a fresh representation of the necessity of holding the exit from the defile, failing which, in his judgment, it would become impossible to pass the Balkans at that point, as we could scarcely count on emerging unmolested from a deep and narrow defile over thirteen miles long. In face of this, to hold the head of the Pass would force us to abandon the idea of an advance, and would be exclusively a defensive measure.

His position astride the exit Gurko declared to be very strong, though he admitted it was too extended and hard to hold with only ten battalions, in case of

a simultaneous advance in force of the Turks from Eski Zagra and Slivno, so he begged General Radetsky, if he decided to hold the exit, to send him reinforcements to the amount of two infantry regiments and two nine-pounder batteries. He further reported that he could not send the Dragoon brigade to Elena, as General Radetsky wished, if he was to retain his position covering the Pass. In that case he could not do without the brigade, which, moreover, had suffered so that it was only equivalent to one regiment.

But General Radetsky was unable to comply with this request. The forces under his command (the 6th corps, plus Gurko's column, the 11th Infantry and 13th Cavalry Divisions) had to defend a line almost a hundred miles in length (from Selvi to Osman Bazar), and was also forced to cover large stores left at Tirnova, its reserve in and near that town being only three infantry regiments. Under these circumstances he could not venture to detach a single battalion to Gurko's help, all the more that the Turks might any minute be expected to advance from the Osman Bazar direction, and he had also to be in readiness to support Prince Mirski's force at Selvi. At the same time he felt it would be dangerous to

leave Gurko without any support, especially as his long line of communications (it is forty miles from Khainkoi to Tirnova) would be threatened if the Turks advanced from Osman Bazar. Moreover, to provision Khainkoi was a matter of great difficulty, and the cavalry of the force, exhausted by previous efforts, urgently needed rest. Therefore he repeated his order to General Gurko to withdraw his infantry to the head of the Khainkoi Pass, detaching one regiment to hold that of Travna, and send back his cavalry to Tirnova. It must here be remarked that the Commander-in-Chief considered the withdrawal of the advance guard from the Khainkoi Pass premature.

On the 25th orders were given for the whole force to fall back to the head of the Pass. The march began at 3.30 p.m., and, though the ascent had been better prepared than the last, yet the troops, marching almost without a halt all night, became very exhausted, and only reached their destination at 7 p.m. the next day. The convoys greatly hindered the progress of the troops, not to mention the crowd of Bulgarians fleeing from the vengeance of the Turks for the hospitality shown us. During the march we got into communication with the troops

that had fallen back on Shipka, especially the Kazan regiment which, by General Gurko's orders, was to effect a junction with the Astrakhan regiment at Sofular and then march to Khainkoi. At Kazanlik the Dragoons encountered a body of some hundreds of Circassians and Bashi-Bazouks, but drove them off and rejoined their comrades.

On the 25th all the cavalry, with the exception of the squadrons of Cossacks which held the passes in the Lesser Balkans, and two squadrons of the Astrakhans sent to Tvarditsa and Maglish to hold the entrance to the passes at those points, began their retreat to Tirnova. On the 27th Gurko reached that place with the Dragoon Brigade, the Kiev Hussars, and nine squadrons of the composite Cossack Brigade, the 16th H.A. battery, the 15th Don battery, and four guns of the 10th Don battery, and from thence all these troops were withdrawn to Nikup to rest.

A force under Major-General Tsvietsinski was formed for the defence of the Khainkoi Ridge, consisting of the 4th Rifle brigade, the 33rd Elets regiment, the 4th and 6th batteries of the 9th Artillery Brigade, a company of the 5th Sappers, and three squadrons of the composite brigade of Cossacks. The sappers set to work to fortify the

position, and the cavalry sent out patrols into the valley of the Tundja. The Siev regiment received orders to march to Tirnova, whence it was proposed to send it to Dranovo to guard the Travna Pass. Our patrols reported that they had sighted small parties of Circassians round the village of Khainkoi, and that the enemy's main body lay partly at Yeni Zagra, partly at Slivno. Communication was also kept open by patrols with the Travna force.

On the 31st orders were received from the headquarters of the 8th Corps that on the 1st August the Rifle Brigade with two mountain guns, and the 4th Field battery were to leave the Pass and join the reserve of the corps. The other troops were to remain there, but were placed under the orders of the commander of the Elets regiment. Thus the Advance Guard was broken up.

In taking leave of his men, General Gurko said, in a farewell order of the 31st July, "We have fought the enemy every day from the 1st to the 6th July, and every day was one of fresh glory to us and the Russian arms. Khainkoi, Kunari, Orezary, Uflani, Kazanlik, and Shipka have for ever linked your name with the valley of the Tundja, and your heroic exploits have made it immortal. On July 16th,

learning that Suleiman Pasha's army was concentrated and preparing to assume the offensive, I led you to meet it. On the 17th, 18th, and 19th, you encountered it, and the brilliant victories gained by you at Yeni Zagra on the 18th, and at Djuranli on the 19th, forced the whole of that army to fall back, in spite of our having only thirteen battalions, while the enemy had thirty. I leave you with a sore heart," he added, "men of the Advance Guard. The memory of the thirty-eight days I spent with you, and of your heroic exploits and heavy labours which I witnessed, of the way in which all three arms vied with each other in conscientiously doing their best, will never fade from my heart, and will remain one of the pleasantest recollections of my life." In a supplementary order the thanks of the Tsar were conveyed to the troops for their glorious and heroic services, and their arduous labours. In taking leave personally of the battalions of the 4th Rifle Brigade, their late commander said, "Your passage of the Balkans may, as regards the difficulties encountered, be compared with that of the Alps by Suvarov, though you do not realize it at present, considering it an every-day affair. Riflemen, the days I have spent with you I look on, and shall always look

on, as the very best of my life. I trust that on some future occasion I may have so splendid a brigade under my command. All the battalions have done admirably, but it was to the 13th and 15th that the hardest work fell, though that was only by chance. I feel sure that when the time comes, the 14th and 16th will show themselves as heroic as the others."

CONCLUSION.

THE importance of the operations of the Advance Guard against the Turks, was of the highest. It must be remembered that after the crossing of the Danube, our forces advanced in three directions, to the east, south, and west respectively, and accordingly the army in the field was split up into three bodies—that of Rustchuk, the Advance Guard, and the Western Force. But in spite of the fact that at first all the three bodies had a series of successes, none of them made such an impression by its operations on our opponents as the Advance Guard, nor was there one that in the end secured such numerous and valuable trophies. To judge the effect on the Turks of the movements of the Advance Guard, it is enough to read the Turkish official reports to be convinced how great it was. The emerging of the force on July 2nd from the Khainkoi defile was the first thunderstroke dealt to the Turks. "In consequence of the way the enemy has spread over

the country, the Empire is placed between life and death," we find in a despatch of the Sultan's Chancellery, dated July 2nd.

Subsequent events made an even greater impression on our adversaries. They began to be alarmed for the safety of Adrianople. "The occupation of Adrianople will reduce the Turkish Empire to the level of the Khanak of Bokhara," we read in a despatch of the Sultan's Chancellery, bearing date July 9th. The panic grew and grew, a change was made in the offices of Commander-in-Chief and Minister of War. Suleiman's army was hastily recalled from Montenegro, with the view of checking the advance of General Gurko, and fortifications were constructed at Chataldji and Buyuk Chekmedje for the protection of Constantinople.

Such was the effect produced by the operations of the Advance Guard. What were the trophies gained by it? They were indeed great. Firstly, the Balkan chain for a considerable distance, (2) the two convenient passes of Khainkoi and Shipka, (3) the town of Tirnova, so important both in a military and political sense, (4) a wide belt of territory which passed into our hands, (5) numerous stores of all kinds, (6) some 1500 prisoners, and

three standards, fifteen guns, and lastly, twenty-three battalions routed and dispersed. Of these numerous trophies the most important was the seizure of a portion of the Balkan range with several passes, of which we made good use in our subsequent advance into Southern Turkey. These results were achieved at the cost stated below, which represents the total loss of the force during the whole period of its operations:—

		Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	Total.
Officers	15	46	—	61
Rank and file	512	870	85	1,467
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	527	916	85	1,528

The percentage of loss was more than 10 per cent. of the whole *personnel*.

The work of the Advance Guard affords many examples of notable skill. Of the operations which fell to the lot of the force, the most successfully carried out were the passage of the Balkans and the seizure of the Shipka Pass. The series of raids carried out to the east of Tirnova induced the Turks to believe that the Russians were heading for Slivno, while the demonstration from Gabrovo drew the attention of our opponents to the northern part of the Shipka Pass. Thus the Turks expected us

to attack at the two extremities of the line of defence entrusted to Reüf, whilst in reality General Gurko was cutting the Turkish line in two, by advancing through the Khainkoi Pass, which was considered impracticable.

“Not long after the passage of that formidable obstacle, the Danube, the telegraph startled us with the astounding news that the Russians had passed the second barrier, viz. the Balkans, as well, and entered the valley of the Tundja. Though at first regarded as exaggerated, this intelligence was soon confirmed, and produced a profound impression on the whole world. Some regarded the crossing of the Balkans as the daring measure of a skilful and calculating leader, others saw in it merely a dashing cavalry raid. In any case it is certain that the movement attracted general attention.” So writes one of the foreign officers who was watching the operations of the force.¹

Another says:—“The operations of the Advance Guard form one of the most interesting episodes of the Russo-Turkish War. They furnish a proof of what can be accomplished by cavalry when well led, and having at its head a bold and enterprising leader.”

¹ “*La Guerre d'Orient*,” par un tacticien, p. 515.

After passing the Balkans, Gurko endeavoured to seize the Shipka Pass. For this purpose it was necessary to keep the Turks two or three days longer under the impression that the Russians were making for Slivno, and in order to bring this about, to once more make incursions to the south and towards Eski Zagra. Under cover of these demonstrations General Gurko led his force to the west, and, scattering all the bodies of the enemy he encountered, suddenly appeared before Shipka.

In the second stage of the operations, viz. those in the valley of the Tundja, we have seen that the Advance Guard for ten days, from July 7th, practically did nothing, and it was not till the 17th of that month that the offensive movement began, if we leave out of count the cavalry raids that preceded that date. But this comparative inactivity was due to the supreme commander, and it was not until July 16th that the General received permission to act independently, when his force at once assumed the offensive, and up to the 19th, inclusive, displayed most notable energy and mobility, and a whole series of engagements took place. But on the 20th there was a relaxation of energy. On that day, in spite of his firm conviction that Suleiman was retreating

southwards from Eski Zagra—and so deeply rooted was the belief that even up to the 25th he continued to be convinced of his retrograde movement,—his force continued to fall back through the Dalboki defile. Is not this retreat rather to be attributed to the universal moral and physical exhaustion which is quite comprehensible after the toils and shocks that fell to the share of those who took part in the operations of the force ?

The expedition across the Balkans is also interesting by reason of its affording the most striking example of the achievements of our cavalry during the war, both because of the numbers employed, the importance of the result attained, the energy and rapidity of movement displayed in attaining it, the distance to which the advance was pushed, and lastly the magnitude of the obstacles it had to surmount. Suffice it to remind the reader of the dashing seizure of Tirnova, the daring raids to Seloi, Plevna, Karabunar, and Kagadjik, the series of demonstrations towards Bebrovo and Gabrovo, and later towards Tvardi Tsa and Yeni Zagra, and he cannot fail to appreciate highly what our cavalry accomplished. On July 5th that cavalry, in spite of the great heat and the extreme exhaustion of the men, advanced even after

the capture of Kazanlik some miles farther, and captured in the village of Shipka the enemy's baggage train and supplies of rations, the result being that Khulussi Pasha was left with no supplies and consequently compelled to abandon the Shipka Pass. In the second half of the campaign beyond the Balkans also our cavalry performed with efficiency the duties laid upon it. By ruining the railway track it checked the advance of Suleiman, though indeed not so effectually as would have been the case had it been sent to the Tirnova-Seimenli dépôt, and wrecked the line that ran to Adrianople. In its actions against the troops of Reüf and Suleiman it did yeoman service by diverting the attention of the former during the time that Gurko was attacking Yeni Zagra; and lastly it parted the forces of Reüf and Suleiman, and finally in the affair at Giuranli saved the right wing of our infantry, which was threatened by some thousands of Circassians. "The mounted troops of the Advance Guard," says a French writer, "proved themselves dashing and enterprising, and in all their encounters with the enemy behaved with remarkable self-reliance.¹ Yet the results attained cost the

¹ "La Guerre d'Orient."

cavalry dearly. It entered on the campaign beyond the Balkans at full strength, and five weeks later returned to Tirnova with not more than forty or fifty horses to a squadron. True, not all the regiments lost so heavily. For instance, the Astrakhan Dragoons between July 21st and 27th lost no more than 12 officers (3 wounded, 9 invalided), 48 rank and file (10 killed, 24 wounded, and 14 sick), and 167 horses, of which 114 were sick. It still comprised 31 officers, 545 rank and file, and 494 horses, not including non-combatants, or 123 horses to a squadron, or some 14 files to a half-troop.¹

The loss sustained was chiefly due to exhaustion and to the horses becoming useless. The cause of this was partly to be found in the fact that, as we stated at the beginning of this sketch, the cavalry had not been sufficiently trained in peace-time for the arduous work that thus fell to its lot. Moreover, the want of practice in the making of lengthy expeditions in large bodies in peace-time led to the result that no practical methods had been worked out for maintaining the vigour of the horses during a long spell of work. Attention must be drawn to the

¹ Drawn from statistics furnished to the writer by M. Sukhotin, who had them from the regimental records.

fact that the horses were never unsaddled, for fear of a surprise, and consequently neither they nor the men could get the needful rest, even in the case of such bodies as were left in camp. Lastly, the question of forage forms such an obstacle to our cavalry as is very difficult to overcome. At that time there were still many cavalry leaders who had not yet realized that only a properly fed horse can bear the brunt of active service. The tendency to be chary of allowances for forage was so great that even in cases where it could be bought of the Bulgarians for a groschen it was deemed advisable to make some other arrangement, merely in order to save the money. More than once in our camps Dragoons and Hussars might be seen cutting wheat with their sabres, and giving it in that state to their horses, when they might have bought excellent grain of the Bulgarians on the spot for a mere trifle.

Naturally such conditions affected most disastrously the vigour of our mounted arm. But in addition to this it is absolutely necessary to realize that the heavy loss in that arm was partly due to its having to go through exceptionally heavy work.

In five weeks it made upwards of two hundred miles,

about seventy being through mountainous country, and by exceedingly arduous tracks. During this time it frequently encountered the enemy, constantly performed outpost and scouting duties, and almost every day made forced marches through terrible heat, which sometimes reached 110° F. This ceaseless and strenuous activity of our horsemen so undermined their powers, that when they got back to Tirnova, greatly diminished in numbers, they were quite unfit for service for the time, and did not recover till they had rested for a whole month and been reinforced to full strength from Russia.

It is interesting to compare the performance of our own and the Turkish troops from the point of view of mobility. In the first stage of the campaign the force under Gurko, which set out from near Sistovo on June 21st, reached Tirnova on the 25th, having made an average fourteen miles a day, besides carrying out numerous reconnaissances. The distance from Tirnova to Khainkoi, some forty miles, twenty-seven of which ran over a most difficult track, was covered by the head of the column in rather more than forty-eight hours. All this time the Turks remained practically inert.

But the difference found its most marked expression in the respective mobility of our troops and those of the Turks during the operations round Yeni and Eski Zagra. Gurko started the same day as Suleiman's army, viz. the 17th, took Yeni Zagra by storm the following day, the 18th, caught up Reüf and routed him at Giuranli on the 19th. Some corps which had been quartered at Kazanlik had to march about fifty-seven miles in addition to fighting, and for some fourteen miles of this distance their way lay over the precipitous Karadja Dagħ.

The Turkish columns, on the other hand, moved far more slowly. From Yeni Zagra to Giuranli is some sixteen miles, from Karabunar railway station to Giuranli about twenty-four, and from Chirpan to Eski Zagra about twenty-two miles: to cover this distance the Turks took some sixty hours. Granting that Reüf's advance was checked by our troops, yet Suleiman's and Khulussi's forces encountered no opposition, while the latter had an excellent high-road to march by. We must not forget, moreover, that the advance of Suleiman's corps was delayed by the fault of its own commander, as he gave orders for the troops to advance not in marching order along the high-road, but in something very like fighting order and across country.

Not less remarkable is the decisive nature of our operations, which yet went hand-in-hand with careful preparation for the various movements.

Advancing cautiously on Tirnova, the force boldly turned a reconnaissance in force of the town into a decisive engagement.

After this, careful and cautious preparations were made for the passage of the Balkans, the force advanced resolutely on Shipka, skilful precautions being taken to secure the line of march to the south and east. Then, as soon as ever he received permission to act on his own initiative, Gurko resolutely assumed the offensive with his whole force; and finally, when the Advance Guard found itself in an awkward position, displayed an energy which we cannot fail to admire, in extricating his column without loss of prestige from its critical situation. Four battalions of the Bulgarian contingent with ten squadrons and fourteen guns during two whole days, July 17th and 18th, actually held in check an enemy counting twelve battalions with artillery and a swarm of Circassians. Later on a portion of this force advanced on the enemy, though he had forty battalions, and stubbornly held him in check during six or seven hours. In the meantime the main body of the force,

numbering $9\frac{1}{2}$ battalions, twenty-two guns, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ Cossack squadrons, moved forward with exceptional rapidity, and on the 18th captured an entrenched position at Yeni Zagra, and on the following day defeated twelve battalions of Turks at Giuranli, and at the close of the action advanced to Yeni Zagra.

Captain Green of the U.S. Army, who was military attaché at our Headquarters throughout the war, says of the operations of Gurko's force:—"This expedition was more than a mounted raid; it was a forward movement of the advance guard of an army consisting of troops of all arms, and excellently carried out. In less than a month one of the principal passes of the Balkans was seized, held by the Russians in spite of fearful attacks, and used by them for the forward movement of their main body in the month of December. A panic spread throughout Turkey, even to Constantinople; bodies of Russian cavalry pushed forward within seventy miles of Adrianople, the second largest city of the Ottoman Empire, and destroyed two lines of railway and the telegraph, and finally the Advance Guard settled the question whether or not a large Turkish army was advancing towards the Balkans. Throughout the campaign we meet with no other such drastic use of mounted

troops as this. The force was constantly on the move, and held the whole country in awe : at times, as on July 17th and 18th, it fought unsupported against a considerable body of the enemy, comprising troops of all arms ; and in many instances it fought as infantry, boldly charging with the bayonet."

The time for an impartial and critical estimate of the work of the Advance Guard has not yet come, and this little work is only intended as a collection of materials for such. The results achieved by the force, and the opinions expressed regarding the work it did by our then opponents, and certain foreign critics alike, justify us without fear of contradiction in saying that these operations deserve to be studied. Such must be our excuse for taking on ourselves to give to the world the present little work.

N. EPAUCHIN.



THE END.

OF TIRNOVO 25TH JUNE 1877.



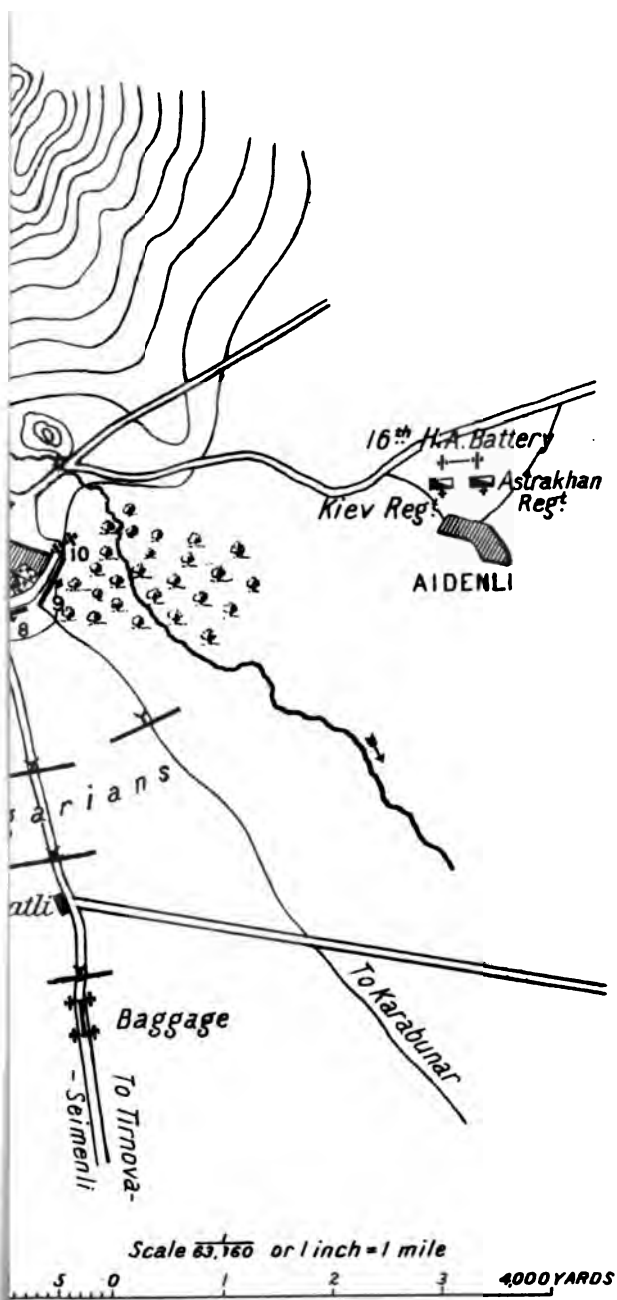
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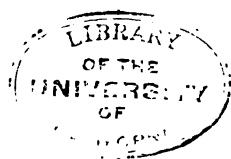
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|-----|---------------------------------|
| 4.. | Advance of dismounted Squadron. |
| 5.. | Turkish 2 gun Battery |
| 6.. | do. 4 gun do. |
| 7.. | Turkish Trenches |
| 8.. | do. Camps |



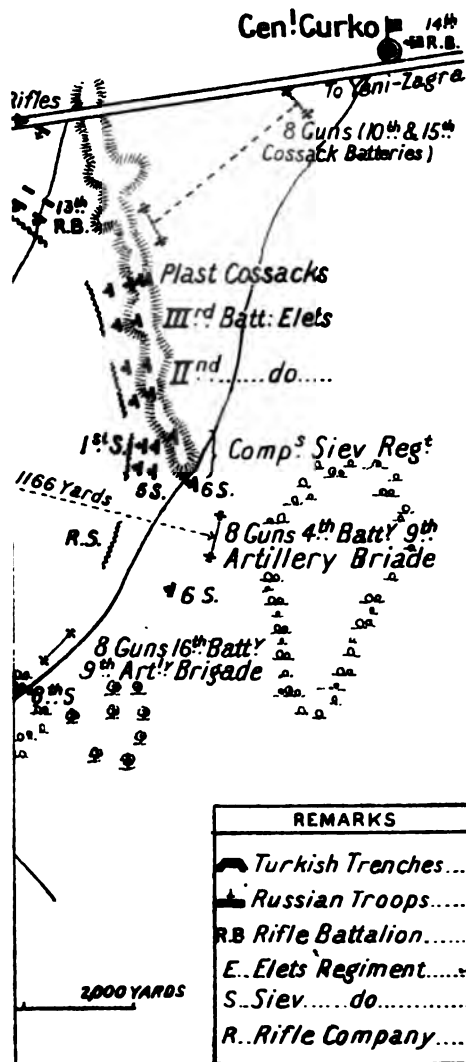


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